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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE

The Human Comedy

PARISIAN LIFE

VOLUME XI

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THE COMTESSE TORNA DE GODOLLO TO MME. PHELLION

Fancy her confusion and agitation, when she saw a lady descend at that moment from a little coupé which drove noisily up to the door of her house, and when, in this unseasonably early visitor, she recognized the elegant Comtesse Torna de Godollo!

The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie Humaine* by Honoré de Balzac, now for the first time completely translated into English.

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THE PETTY BOURGEOIS. IN TWO VOLUMES. TRANSLATED BY GEORGE BURNHAM IVES, AND ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT ETCHINGS. VOL. II.

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THE PETTY BOURGEOIS

PART SECOND

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Between the two parts of this narrative an event of vast importance had taken place in Phellion's life.

Every one has heard of the disasters of the Odéon, that fatal theatre which, for years and years, consumed the substance of all its directors. Rightly or wrongly, the quarter in which that dramatic impossibility is situated is still convinced that it is deeply interested in its prosperity, and more than once the mayor and most eminent citizens of the arrondissement, with a courage that does them honor, have been known to resort to the most desperate combinations to galvanize the corpse.

To be connected with theatrical matters is one of the most persistent and undying ambitions of the lesser bourgeoisie; wherefore the successive saviors of the Odéon have always deemed themselves rewarded by being entrusted with an ostensible share in the management of the enterprise.

It was in execution of a combination of this sort

that Minard, as mayor of the eleventh arrondissement, had been called to the presidency of the reading committee with authority to select at his pleasure a certain number of prominent citizens of the Latin quarter to act as his associates.

We shall soon learn the exact status of La Peyrade's designs upon Céleste's *dot*. For the present we will simply say that these designs, as they approached maturity, were inevitably noised abroad, and as they seemed to point as certainly to the exclusion of Minard the advocate's candidacy, as to that of Félix, the professor, the prejudice manifested at an earlier period by Minard père against the elder Phellion was transformed into an unequivocal inclination toward a cordial understanding; there is nothing which so soothes and draws together two persons as the feeling that both have received a rebuff from the same source.

When judged without the evil eye of a rival father-in-law, Phellion became in Minard's estimation a Roman of the most incorruptible integrity, and a man whose little treatises had been adopted by the University, that is to say, a healthy, experienced mind.

When, therefore, the mayor was called upon to determine the personnel of the dramatic customs-service of which he had become the chief, he thought at once of Phellion; and to that noble citizen, it seemed, on the day when a place in that august tribunal was offered him, as if a golden crown were placed upon his brow.

It will readily be understood that a man with Phellion's ideas of the solemnity of existence did not accept lightly or without profound reflection the sacred, lofty duties he had been asked to assume. He said to himself that he was called upon to exercise the functions of magistracy, of a sacerdotal office.

"To judge of men," was his reply to Minard, who was amazed at his long hesitation, "is an awful responsibility; but to judge of intellects—who can esteem himself equipped for such a duty?"

On this occasion again, the family, the reef upon which all strong resolutions come to grief, had tried to usurp dominion of his conscience, and the thought of the boxes and privileges the future member of the committee would have at his disposal to bestow upon his kindred, aroused his household to such a white-hot degree of excitement that for a moment his free-will was endangered. But luckily Brutus had seen his way clear to decide in favor of the course to which he was driven by a veritable insurrection of the whole Phellionic tribe; at the suggestion of Barniol, his son-in-law, seconded by his own personal inspiration, he had persuaded himself that by virtue of his determination to vote always in favor of works of irreproachable morality, and of his unalterable purpose to throw obstacles in the path of every play to which a mother might not properly take her daughter, he was called upon to render most signal service to the cause of public morals and public order.

Phellion, therefore, had become a member of the

Areopagus, to use his own expression, presided over by Minard, and, to continue to adopt his forms of speech, he had *gone forth* to acquit himself of these duties, *no less interesting than delicate*, when the conversation took place which we are about to transcribe. This conversation is indispensable at this point, because it is essential to the comprehension of the subsequent developments of this narrative, and even more because it brings out in strong relief the envious instinct which is one of the most salient peculiarities of the bourgeois character.

The session of the committee had been extremely stormy.

Apropos of a comedy entitled *La Mort d'Hercule*, the classic element and the romantic element, which the worthy mayor had taken pains to balance in the composition of the committee, had been on the point of tearing each other's hair.

Twice Phellion had spoken and his auditors were amazed at the wealth of metaphor with which a major in the National Guard may interlard his speech when his literary convictions are assailed.

After the vote, victory having perched upon the banner of the party whose eloquent mouthpiece Phellion had been, he said as he descended the staircase of the theatre with Minard:

"We have done a good work to-day! This *Mort d'Hercule* reminds me strongly of the *Mort d'Hector*, by the late Luce de Lancival; the play we have just accepted is studded with sublime lines."

"Yes," said Minard, "the versification is in

excellent taste; there are some fine passages in it, and I confess that I rank this sort of literature far above Messire Colleville's anagrams."

"Oh!" said Phellion, "Colleville's anagrams are mere *jeux d'esprit* which have nothing in common with the solemn accents of Melpomene."

"For all that," rejoined Minard, "I can assure you that he attaches great importance to the idiotic things, and, apropos of his anagrams, as well as apropos of many other things, the master-musician has got to be precious conceited. Indeed, since their emigration to the Quartier de la Madeleine, it's my humble opinion that, not only Messire Colleville, but his wife and daughter, the Thuilliers and the whole crowd have assumed consequential airs very hard to justify."

"What would you have?" said Phellion; "a man must have a very strong head not to succumb to the intoxicating fumes of opulence; our friends have become very wealthy by the purchase of that property, where they have decided to live; we must overlook the first moment of intoxication; by the way, the dinner they gave us yesterday for the housewarming was as well served as it was delicious."

"I also," said Minard, "can flatter myself that I have given some noteworthy dinners at my house, at which men of high rank in the government did not disdain to be my guests; but I am not puffed up beyond all measure on that account, and what I was before, that I have continued to be."

"But you, Monsieur le Maire, have long been accustomed to the luxurious manner of living you have earned the right to enjoy by your great talent for business; while our friends, on the other hand, having taken passage only yesterday in fortune's smiling bark, haven't yet got their sea-legs on, as they say."

To cut short a conversation in which it seemed to Phellion that Minard was becoming very *caustic,* he stopped as if to take leave of him. To reach their respective homes their road was not the same.

"Are you going through the Luxembourg?" asked Minard, declining to allow himself to be given the slip.

"I am going through but I shall stop there. I agreed to meet Madame Phellion at the end of the main avenue, and she must be waiting for me now with the little Barniols."

"Very good; I will give myself the pleasure of saluting Madame Phellion, and at the same time take a little fresh air, for it makes no difference what eloquent things are said, one's head gets tired at the business we've just been doing."

Minard had realized that Phellion was not anxious to reply to his somewhat harsh strictures touching the new Thuillier establishment. He did not undertake, therefore, to renew that subject with him, but when he had Madame Phellion to talk to he felt very sure that his flings would find a more ready echo.

"Well, dear madame," he began, "what did you think of the dinner yesterday?"

"It was very fine," replied Madame Phellion, "and as soon as I tasted the *potage à la bisque* I saw that some great artist, like Chevet, had taken the place of their raw cook. But it lacked joviality; it wasn't like our free and easy little parties in the Latin quarter. And then, didn't it seem to you as it did to me that neither Madame nor Mademoiselle Thuillier appeared to be the mistress of the house? I came to the conclusion finally that I was at Madame—what's her name? I haven't yet succeeded in fixing it in my memory."

"Torna, Comtesse de Godollo," interposed Phellion. "The name's a most euphonious one, however."

"As euphonious as you please, my dear, but somehow it doesn't sound to me like a name at all."

"It's a Magyar, or to use a more common term, a Hungarian name. Our own name, if one chose to quibble over it, might be said to sound as if it was borrowed from the Greek."

"It may be, but we have the advantage of being known, not only in our own quarter, but in all the teaching world, in which we have succeeded in winning an honorable position, while as to this Hungarian countess, who makes cloud and sunshine in the Thuillier family, who knows where she comes from? How is it that with the manners of a great lady, for no one can deny the woman that,—she has a very distinguished air—how, I say, did she ever fall in love with Brigitte, who, between ourselves, has never lost the taste of the soil, and smells of the

concierge's daughter enough to make one sick? For my part, if you must know, I believe that this devoted friend is a schemer, she scents a fortune there and proposes to try a little speculation later."

"Oho! then you don't know as yet how the connection between Madame la Comtesse Godollo and the Thuilliers began?"

"She's one of their tenants, who occupies the entresol just under them."

"True, but there's more in it than that. Zélie, my wife, got it from Joséphine, who at one time would have been very glad to take service with us, but it didn't come about because our Françoise, who had thought of leaving us, to get married, changed her mind. Let me tell you then, dear Madame, that the emigration of the Thuilliers is to be attributed to Madame de Godollo alone, she was their upholsterer."

"What, an upholsterer!" cried Phellion, "that woman, so *comme il faut*, of whom one would instinctively say: *Incessu patuit dea*, which we render quite inadequately in French: *avoir un port de reine!*—To have the bearing of a queen.—"

"Allow me," said Minard; "I do not claim that Madame la Comtesse de Godollo carries on directly the furnishing business; but at the time when Mademoiselle Thuillier, by La Peyrade's advice, decided to take charge personally of the building near the Madeleine, that young gentleman, who has not such absolute influence over her mind as he would like us to believe, could not even succeed, without

assistance, in persuading her to occupy the sumptuous suite in her own building where we were entertained yesterday. Mademoiselle Brigitte objected, because she would have to change all her habits, and because her relations would not follow her to that distant quarter—"

"It is certain," interrupted Madame Phellion, "that she must have had other pleasures in prospect than those one finds in her salon, to induce her to spend money for a carriage every Sunday.—To think that except on the day of the party to secure Thuillier's election to the General Council, it has never occurred to her to open the piano!"

"Indeed," rejoined Minard, "it would have been very agreeable to have such talent as yours brought into requisition sometimes, but our good Brigitte's mind doesn't entertain ideas of that sort. She would have thought of the two extra candles to be lighted. Hundred-sou pieces make the music she likes. And so when La Peyrade and Thuillier insisted on her leaving the apartments on Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, she exhibited the greatest concern over the necessary expense of making the change. She thought, and wisely too, that the old finery of her former abode would produce a most extraordinary effect under gilded and frescoed ceilings."

"See how one thing leads to another," cried Phellion, "and how luxury, sifting down from the topmost level of society through the lower classes, brings about, sooner or later, the downfall of empires!"

"There, my dear major," rejoined Minard, "you touch one of the most difficult problems of political economy; many of the best minds consider, on the contrary, that luxury is a thing most essential in the interest of commerce, which is certainly the life-blood of nations. At all events, that point of view, which is not yours, would seem to be Madame de Godollo's, for they say that her quarters are very daintily furnished, and that she made this suggestion to Mademoiselle Thuillier in order to bring her round to her views on the subject of elegant surroundings: 'One of my friends,' said she, 'A Russian princess for whom one of the leading upholsterers in Paris has just furnished apartments in superb style, has been suddenly recalled by the Czar, a gentleman who isn't given to joking. The poor woman is compelled, therefore, to turn everything she has into money, and I am sure that for a quarter part of what the furnishings cost her, if paid in cash, she would let everything go; everything is almost entirely new, and there are a number of things that have never been used at all.'"

"In that case," cried Madame Phellion, "all the magnificence that was waved in our faces last night is cheap and second-hand magnificence."

"As you say, madame," replied Minard, "and the thing that decided Mademoiselle Brigitte to take this splendid risk was not so much the desire to replace her old furniture, as the thought that she was doing an excellent piece of business; there's still a little

something of Madame la Ressource, in *l'Avare,* in the old girl, you see."

"I think you're in error there, Monsieur le Maire," said Phellion; "Madame la Ressource is a character in *Turcaret,* a very immoral play of the late Le Sage."

"Do you think so?" said Minard. "You may be right; but after all, this is sure, that, if the advocate got himself into Brigitte's good graces by arranging the purchase of the house for her, this foreigner has acquired the influence we all noticed by jockeying her about the furniture; did you observe, too, the struggle that seemed to be in progress between the two influences; the personal and the real, so to speak?"

"Why yes," said Madame Phellion, with an effusiveness which bore witness to the great interest the conversation had for her, "it seemed to me that the great lady condescended to contradict the lawyer, and that she put some little acidity into her contradiction."

"Oh! it was very noticeable, and the schemer was well aware of it. Indeed, he seemed to me much disturbed by her hostility! The Thuilliers he got hold of very cheap, for between you and me, they're not the strongest characters in the world; but he feels that he has met a hard-hitting adversary now, and he's looking anxiously about for some point on which to attack her."

"On my word," said Madame Phellion, "it's justice! For some time past, my gentleman, who

used to be so humble and make himself so small, has assumed a lordly air in the family that is simply intolerable; he makes no secret of his intention to be the son-in-law, and, in point of fact, in the matter of Thuillier's election, he gulled us all, and used us as stepping-stones in his matrimonial ambition.

"Very true," said Minard, "but at the present time I can assure you, our man's stock is very low. In the first place he won't find an opportunity every day for his *good friend*, as he calls him, to buy property worth a million for a crust of bread."

"Did they get the place so very cheap, pray?" queried Madame Phellion.

"They got it for nothing, as the result of a despicable intrigue, that Desroches told me all about the other day, and that might make it hot for Monsieur l'Avocat, if it should be known to the council of his order. Next in line comes the election to the Chamber. Eating has given our worthy Thuillier an appetite, but he sees already that, when it comes to cutting off this slice for him, Monsieur La Peyrade won't find it so easy to pull the wool over our eyes. That's why they've turned to Madame de Godollo who seems to have connections very high in the political world. But, to say nothing of that matter, which is still a long way ahead, the Comtesse de Godollo is making herself more and more necessary to Brigitte day by day; for, if I must say it, except for the assistance lent her by the great lady, the poor old maid, in her gilded salon, would look like a ragged dress in a young bride's trousseau."

"Oh! Monsieur le Maire, how severe you are!" simpered Madame Phellion.

"No; but let us look into it," rejoined Minard, "with our hands upon our consciences: is Brigitte, is Madame Thuillier capable of presiding over a salon? The Hungarian woman supervised the whole arrangement of the suite; she obtained the man-servant, whose good form and intelligence you have noticed; she prepared the menu of yesterday's dinner,—in short, she is the guardian angel of the colony, which would have set the whole quarter laughing but for her intervention. And the strangest part of it is that instead of being, as you thought at first, a parasite after the fashion of the Provençal, this foreigner, who seems to have a pretty little fortune of her own, appears to be not only disinterested, but generous as well. For instance, Brigitte's dress and Madame Thuillier's, which you ladies all noticed, were presents she was good enough to make them, and it was simply because she superintended the toilet of our two hostesses that you were amazed yesterday to find them not arrayed in their usual dowdy fashion."

"But what can be the motive of this devoted, motherly guardianship?" asked Madame Phellion.

"My dear wife," said Phellion solemnly, "human actions are not always, thank God! due to selfishness and to despicable motives of self-interest. There are some hearts still, which take pleasure in doing good for its own sake. This woman may have seen in our friends fellow-creatures about to go astray in

their progress toward a sphere whose height they had not accurately measured, and having encouraged their first step, the purchase of this furniture, she may well have taken pleasure later, like a nurse who has become attached to her nursling, in lavishing upon them the milk of her greater knowledge and her advice."

"He has the air of declining to take part in the game, has your dear husband," said Minard to Madame Phellion, "but see how he caps our trick!"

"I, cap your trick!" exclaimed Phellion; "that's not my intention nor my habit."

"It seems to me, however, that it would be hard to say more plainly that the Thuilliers are idiots, and that Madame de Godollo has undertaken to bring them up fastidiously."

"I do not accept as applied to our friends," said Phellion, "a suggestion so inimical to the esteem in which they are held. I meant to say that they perhaps lack experience, and that the noble lady has placed at their service her knowledge of the world and its customs; but I protest against any interpretation that goes beyond my thought as thus limited."

"You must agree, however, my dear major, that, in the idea of giving Céleste to this La Peyrade there is something more than lack of experience? there is both folly and immorality; for, you know, the advocate's equivocal behavior with Madame Colleville—"

"Monsieur le Maire," interrupted Phellion with

redoubled solemnity, "Solon, the lawmaker, was unwilling to punish parricide because he considered it an impossible crime. I have much the same idea of the offence to which you seem to allude. Madame Colleville confer favors upon Monsieur de la Peyrade, and at the same time think of bestowing her daughter upon him? No, monsieur, no! that passes my comprehension. If questioned on this subject before a court, Madame Colleville would reply, as Marie-Antoinette did: 'I appeal to the heart of every mother!' "

"And yet, my friend, allow me to tell you that Madame Colleville is tremendously dissolute, and that she has proved it very handsomely."

"Let's stop there, my dear," said Phellion. "It's nearly dinner-time, and I find that we are letting the conversation drift gradually into the muddy paths of slander."

"You are full of illusions, my dear major," said Minard, giving his hand to Phellion, "but they are illusions worthy of respect and I envy you them.—Madame, I have the honor—" added the mayor, saluting Madame Phellion respectfully.

And they went their respective ways.

*

The information gathered by the mayor of the eleventh arrondissement was reasonably accurate. In the Thuillier salon, since they had moved to the Quartier de la Madeleine, between the peevish Brigitte and the plaintive Madame Thuillier, might be seen a woman's face, overflowing with fascination and grace, which communicated to the salon in question a most unusual appearance of refinement.

It was true that, through the good offices of this woman, who had become her tenant, Brigitte had made a speculation in furniture, no less fortunate, but much more avowable than the famous purchase of real property. For six thousand francs she had come into possession of a quantity of furniture almost fresh from the upholsterers' workrooms, and which represented a value of at least thirty thousand francs.

It was true also that, as the result of a service so well calculated to sink deep into the old maid's heart, she had fallen into the habit of treating the lovely stranger with the respectful deference of which the bourgeoisie, notwithstanding its jealous rivalry, is much less sparing than one might imagine to titles of nobility and those who occupy lofty positions in the social hierarchy. As this Hungarian countess was a woman of great tact and of most distinguished talents,—when she assumed the superior position in the establishment of her protégé's

which she deemed it advisable to assume, she was very careful not to allow her influence to take the shape of fault-finding, imperious tutelage. On the contrary, encouraging Brigitte's claim to be a model housekeeper, she made a great show of seeking the advice of *Miss* Thuillier—a pet name she was pleased to bestow upon her—concerning the material management of her own establishment; so that, while keeping in her own hands the department of sumptuary expenses both in her own household and her neighbors', she seemed rather to be imparting information in return for what she received than to be exercising a sort of protectorate.

As time went on it was no longer possible, even for La Peyrade, to fail to see how the land lay: in the light of the stranger's influence his own had evidently paled, nor was the countess's antagonism confined to a simple struggle of her credit against his. Having taken her stand frankly in opposition to his candidacy for Céleste's hand, she accorded unequivocal protection to the love of Professor Félix; and Minard, whom this detail had not escaped, was very careful not to communicate it to those who were most interested in it, among the other pieces of intelligence of which he had been so lavish.

La Peyrade was the more chagrined to find his power thus undermined by a feeling of hostility whereof the cause was entirely inexplicable to him, for the reason that he had himself to blame for having had a hand in introducing this redoubtable adversary into the citadel.

His first mistake was committed when he yielded to the empty pleasure of cheating Cérizet's ambition to be principal tenant; if Brigitte had not, by his advice and upon his urgent representations, undertaken the management of the property, the odds were enormous against her ever making the acquaintance of Madame de Godollo.

He was guilty of another imprudent act when he urged the Thuilliers to leave their retreat in the Latin quarter.

At that time, when his influence had reached its highest point, Théodose looked upon his marriage as an accomplished fact, and he felt an almost childish haste to rush on toward the sphere of fashion and elegance which seemed to be open to him. He had, therefore, seconded the arguments of the Hungarian, and it seemed to him as if he were simply sending the Thuilliers on before to prepare his bed in the handsome apartment he was some day to occupy with them. He had seen still another advantage in this arrangement, that, namely, of removing Céleste from almost daily association with a rival whom he could but look upon as dangerous. Félix, deprived of the advantages of convenient proximity to his beloved, would be compelled to make his visits at longer intervals, and it would be an easier task to ruin his chances in the heart wherein he was installed only upon condition of giving satisfactory assurances upon the religious matters in which he had shown so refractory a spirit.

But more than one obstacle had arisen to all these schemes of the Provençal.

To enlarge the Thuillier horizon was to run the risk of raising up rivals in their admiring affection, which had thus far been lavished exclusively upon him. In the sort of provincial circle in which they lived, having no one with whom to compare him, Brigitte and his *good friend* might well have placed him upon an eminence from which he would inevitably be cast down by the juxtaposition of other superior minds and other refined characters. And so, even aside from the blows which had been dealt him stealthily by Madame de Godollo, the idea of the transpontine emigration was a bad one, from the standpoint of his relations with the Thuilliers, and but little better, considered in reference to the Colleville.

The latter had followed their friends to the house in the Quartier de la Madeleine, and a rear suite on the entresol had been let to them at a rent consistent with their resources. But Colleville found that the rooms lacked air and light, and as he was obliged to journey every day from Boulevard de la Madeleine to his office in Faubourg Saint-Jacques, he grumbled constantly about the arrangement of which he was the victim, and concluded that La Peyrade was becoming a tyrant. On the other hand, Madame Colleville, on the pretext of raising herself to the level of the neighborhood to which she had removed, plunged into a frightful vortex of hats and mantles and new dresses, which necessitated the

presentation of a multitude of bills for portentous amounts, and led daily to more or less stormy domestic scenes. As to Céleste, she certainly had fewer opportunities to see young Phellion, but she also had fewer chances of being drawn into religious controversies with him, and absence, which is dangerous only to lukewarm attachments, made her think more tenderly and less theologically of the man of her dreams.

All these false calculations of Théodose's were as nothing, however, compared with another matter which tended to diminish his influence still more and bore heavily upon him in his precarious situation.

In consideration of an advance of ten thousand francs to which Thuillier had submitted with very good grace, that worthy was led to expect that, at the end of a week, the cross of the Legion of Honor would gratify the secret longing of his whole life.

But nearly two months had passed and not one word did he hear of the glorious plaything; and the quondam deputy-chief, who would have taken such keen delight in sporting his red ribbon on the asphalt of Boulevard de la Madeleine, of which he had become one of the most assiduous frequenters, still had nothing save the flowers that grow in the fields to adorn his buttonhole,—a privilege enjoyed by all the world, and of which he was much less proud than *our* Béranger.

La Peyrade had spoken, to be sure, of an unforeseen and inexplicable opposition which had nullified all the Comtesse du Bruel's obliging efforts; but

Thuillier was ill-satisfied with that explanation, and in his moments of keen disappointment he did not hesitate to cry, like Chicaneau in *Les Plaideurs:* "Eh! then give me back my money!"

However, there was no rupture, because La Peyrade still held him in leash with the famous pamphlet, *Concerning Taxes and Sinking-Funds.* The conclusion had been postponed during the confusion of moving. During that agitated period Thuillier was not able to turn his attention to the revision of the proof, as to which, it will be remembered, he had reserved the right of most minute scrutiny.

Realizing at last that, to restore his influence which was evaporating day by day, he must strike a decisive blow, the advocate determined to take this same pettifogging disposition as the starting-point of a plan, as profound as it was venturesome, which came into his mind.

One day, as they were going over the last leaves of the pamphlet, a discussion arose concerning the word *nepotism,* which Thuillier desired to strike out from one of the sentences written by La Peyrade, on the ground that he had never before seen the word used anywhere and that it was a neologism,—that is to say, something, in the literary ideas of the bourgeoisie, equivalent to the idea of '93 and the Terror.

Ordinarily La Peyrade submitted patiently enough to the criticisms of his *good friend,* but on this occasion he betrayed considerable excitement, and informed Thuillier that he would have to finish

for himself the work which he criticized so luminously and intelligently, and for several days they saw nothing of him.

Thuillier supposed at first that it was a mere passing outbreak of ill-temper; but as La Peyrade's absence was prolonged he felt that he must make a conciliatory overture, and he went to the Provençal's office to apologize and put an end to his sulking. As he preferred, however, to give the proceeding a turn which would allow his self-esteem a chance to withdraw with honor, he said carelessly, as he entered the room: "Well, my dear fellow, we were both right: *nepotism* means the authority exerted by the popes' nephews. I looked in the dictionary and it gives no other meaning; but from what Phellion tells me it would seem that the meaning of the word has been extended, in political parlance, to include the influence which corrupt ministers allow anybody to exercise contrary to law; so I think we may retain the expression, although it isn't understood in the same way by Napoléon Landais."

La Peyrade, who, when he greeted his visitor, affected to be very busy arranging his files of documents, contented himself with a shrug and made no reply.

"Well," continued Thuillier, "have you seen the proofs of the last two sheets? For we must be getting on."

"If you haven't sent anything to the printer," replied La Peyrade, "we can have no proofs; for my part I haven't touched pen to paper."

"Why, my dear Théodose," said Thuillier, "it isn't possible that you have taken offence at so small a matter. I don't flatter myself on my writing; but, as I am to sign it, I suppose I can have my opinion about a word."

"But *Môsieu* Phellion," retorted the advocate, "is a writer; and as you consult him I don't see why you shouldn't get him to finish the book with you, for, so far as I'm concerned, I've sworn to have nothing more to do with it."

"God! what a temper!" cried Brigitte's brother; "here you are in a rage now, because I seemed to be in doubt about an expression, and because I consulted somebody. Why you know very well that I have read passages from the work, as if it were my own, to Phellion, Colleville, Minard and Barniol, to see what effect it will produce on the public; but that's no reason why I should want to put my name to what they might write. Do you want to know how much confidence I have in you? Madame la Comtesse de Godollo, when I read a few pages to her yesterday, told me that the pamphlet was likely to bring me into collision with the king's attorney: do you think that stopped me?"

"Ah!" said La Peyrade ironically; "I think the family oracle looks at things very wisely, and I have no desire to bring your head to the scaffold."

"That's all nonsense," said Thuillier. "Do you or do you not intend to leave me in the lurch?"

"Literary questions," replied the advocate, "set the best friends by the ears even more completely

than political questions; I desire to put an end to this cause of disputes between us."

"But, my dear Théodose, I never set up to be a man of letters; I think I have common sense and I say what I think; you can't bear me ill-will for that, and certainly if you play me the scurvy trick of refusing to work with me, it must be that you have some other grievance against me that I don't know of."

"Where's the scurvy trick? There's nothing so easy for you as to give up writing a pamphlet, and then you'll be Jérome Thuillier as before."

"But I should say that it was your own suggestion that such a publication would help along my future election to the Chamber; and then again, I tell you I've read snatches of it to our friends; I have spoken about it in the Municipal Council, and now if the work doesn't appear I am disgraced, they'll say the government has bought me."

"You have only to say that you are the friend of the incorruptible Phellion, that will atone for everything; you can even give Céleste to that booby of a son of his, and that alliance will protect you more surely against suspicion."

"Théodose," thereupon said Thuillier, "there's something you don't tell me; it isn't natural that for a mere quarrel over a word you should be determined to ruin your friend's reputation."

"Well, yes," said La Peyrade, having apparently made up his mind to speak, "I don't love ingratitude."

"Nor do I," said Thuillier with animation, "and if you have any idea of accusing me of anything so low and vile I call on you to explain yourself; you must stop your hinting sooner or later; what have you to complain of? what reproach have you to make against the man whom only a few days ago you still called your friend?"

"Nothing and everything," said La Peyrade; "you and your sister are much too clever to break openly with a man who has put a million in your hands at the risk of his reputation; but I'm not so simple that I can't see through a mill-stone when there's a hole in it: there are people about you who are at work, secretly, to ruin me, and Brigitte has but one thought now, and that is to find some honest excuse for not keeping her promises. Men like myself don't send notes of that sort to protest, and I certainly don't propose to force myself on her, but I confess that I was very far from expecting such treatment."

"Come, come," said Thuillier earnestly, as he spied a tear glistening in the advocate's eyes and was entirely taken in thereby; "I don't know what Brigitte may have done to you, but one thing is certain and that is that I have never ceased to be your most devoted friend."

"No," said La Peyrade, "since the setback in the matter of the Cross, I am not even worth throwing to the dogs, as they say. Can I contend against these hidden forces? Great God! perhaps it's this very pamphlet that you've talked so much about

that has disturbed the government and prevented your appointment. Ministers are such idiots that they prefer to wait until their hand is forced by the noise the thing makes when it's published, instead of doing it with good grace simply to reward your services. But these are political mysteries that never occur to your sister's mind."

"What the devil!" said Thuillier, "I flatter myself that I am reasonably clear-sighted, and I haven't noticed that Brigitte has changed toward you."

"True," retorted La Peyrade, "your sight is so clear that you don't even see by her side this Madame de Godollo, without whom she can't seem to live now."

"Aha!" said Thuillier slyly; "so we're having a touch of jealousy!"

"I don't know whether jealousy's the right word," replied La Peyrade, "but, after all, your sister, whose mind isn't above the ordinary, and whom I'm amazed that a man of your intellectual superiority should allow to assume the authority which she uses and abuses—"

"What can I do, my dear fellow?" interrupted Thuillier, swallowing the flattery, "she's so entirely devoted to me!"

"I admit that weakness," rejoined La Peyrade, "but, I say again, your sister is vastly inferior to you. Well, I say that when a man with the qualities you are pleased to credit me with does her the honor to advise her and devote himself to her as I have done, he can't be expected to like it, when he

finds himself supplanted in her confidence by a woman from no one knows where, and all because of a few rags of curtains and a few old arm-chairs she has helped her to buy."

"With women, as you know," replied Thuillier, "household affairs are of more importance than anything else."

"Believe me, Brigitte, who handles all the money, assumes also to manage affairs of the heart with a high hand, and, as you're so very perspicacious, you must have seen that nothing is less settled now in Brigitte's mind than my marriage to Mademoiselle Colleville; and yet my love for her was solemnly authorized by you."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Thuillier; "I should like to see anyone try to interfere with our arrangements."

"Without speaking of Brigitte," said the advocate, "I can tell you someone whose mind is wholly intent upon upsetting them, and that someone is Mademoiselle Céleste; in spite of the obstacles which their divergent opinions on religious matters seem to place between them, her innocent heart is still filled with the image of little Phellion."

"But why not tell Flavie to regulate that matter?"

"No one knows Flavie root and branch better than you do, my dear fellow. She's a woman before she's a mother; I have found it necessary to pay court to her a bit, and, you understand, although she is willing the marriage should come off, she has no very keen desire for it."

"Well then," said Thuillier, "I'll undertake to speak to Céleste; it sha'n't be said that a slip of a girl told us what we should do and what we shouldn't."

"That's just what I don't want," cried La Peyrade, "that you should take a hand in the matter at all; aside from your relations with your sister you have a will of iron, and I don't propose to have it said that you exerted your authority to force Céleste into my arms; I propose, on the contrary, that the child shall be left entirely free to dispose of her heart; but I do think I am entitled to ask that she should declare herself plainly between Monsieur Félix and myself, for I can't continue in this situation, which is killing me. If postponed to the time when you are chosen deputy, the marriage becomes a dream; it is impossible for me to consent that the most important event of my life should be left at the mercy of future contingencies; and then, there was a savor of bargaining that wasn't at all agreeable to me in the plan upon which we agreed in the first place. I am inclined to confide something to you, my dear fellow, in view of all the unpleasant things I am compelled to submit to. Dutocq can tell you that before you left your quarters on Rue Saint-Dominique, an heiress was in perfect good faith offered to me in his presence,—one who will have a greater fortune than you will leave to Mademoiselle Céleste. I refused, because I was foolish enough to have lost my heart, and because an alliance with so honorable a family as yours seemed to me most

desirable; but after all, Brigitte must understand plainly that even if Céleste refuses me, I am not to be thrown over."

"I should say not," said Thuillier; "but the idea of leaving the decision of the affair to that little ninny, if as you say, she has a fancy for Félix!—"

"It's all the same to me," said the advocate, "I must get out of this position at any cost; I can't stand it any longer; you talk about your pamphlet, —I'm not capable of finishing it; you're a ladies' man, and you must know how the heartless creatures take possession of one's whole being."

"Pshaw!" said Thuillier with a fatuous expression, "they have had me, but I never gave in to them very often; I took them up and put them down."

"Very good, but I, with my southern nature, feel more warmly; and then, you know, Céleste has attractions of a different sort from all your lights-o'-love. Brought up by you, under your eyes, she has become an adorable creature; but it was a great mistake to allow that youngster, who isn't suited to her in any way, to set himself up in her heart."

"You are right ten times over, but it's a mere childish friendship; Félix and she used to play together, and you came on the scene much later; indeed it's a sure proof of our great esteem for you, that as soon as you appeared we abandoned our former plans."

"You, yes," said La Peyrade. "With a powerful brain, and literary tastes, which are often manifested in ideas replete with cleverness and good

sense, you have a heart of gold; but you will see how Brigitte will resist when you suggest putting forward the marriage!"

"But I think that Brigitte has always wanted you and still wants you for a *son-in-law*, if I may so express myself; even if she didn't, I beg you to believe that, in matters of importance, I know how to enforce my wishes. But let us understand exactly what you desire; then we will start off with the left foot, and you'll see that everything will go along all right."

"I desire," said La Peyrade, "to put the finishing touch to the pamphlet, for I think of you first of all."

"Certainly," said Thuillier, "we mustn't go down in sight of land."

"Well, start with the idea that I am completely used up and dazed by the way this marriage is hanging fire, and, you see, you won't get a page out of me until the question's settled in one way or another."

"But how do you state the question?" asked Thuillier.

"If Céleste's decision is to be adverse to me, I naturally desire to know it as soon as possible. If I am doomed to marry for money why I mustn't lose the opportunity I spoke of."

"Very good; how long a time will you give us?"

"It seems to me that a girl ought to find out what she wants in a fortnight."

"Of course she ought," said Thuillier, "but I hate to leave it to Céleste to decide without appeal."

"I'll take the chance; I shall be relieved from this uncertainty, which is the most important point to me; and then, between ourselves, I'm not so venturesome as I seem to be; a son of Phellion's, that is to say pigheadedness incarnate in stupidity, will never have done with his philosophical hesitation in a fortnight, and certainly Céleste won't accept him for a husband until he has given her pledges of his conversion."

"That's very probable. But what if Céleste should try to spin the matter out, and refuse to accept the alternative?"

"That's your affair," said the Provençal. "I don't know what you understand by 'the family' in Paris; but I know that in our Comtat of Avignon, it's an unprecedented thing to give a young girl such liberty. If you, your sister—supposing that she is playing a square game—and a father and mother can't succeed between you in making a child, whose dowry you are to provide, content to do so simple and so reasonable a thing as to choose as she pleases between two suitors, why excuse me! You'd better just write on the house door that Céleste is queen and mistress."

"We haven't quite got to that point yet," said Thuillier with a knowing look.

"As for you, old boy," rejoined La Peyrade, "I put you off until Céleste has decided; then, whatever luck I have, I'll go to work, and in three days it will be all done."

"At all events," said Thuillier, "I know now

what you've got in your mind, and I'll have a talk with Brigitte."

"Your conclusion is rather melancholy," said La Peyrade, "but unhappily that's how it is."

"What's that? what do you mean?"

"I should prefer, as you can imagine, to hear you tell me that the matter is settled;—but old creases can't be ironed out."

"Ah! you think, then, that I'm a man with no will of my own, and that I can't act on my own responsibility?"

"Not at all! but I'd like to be in a corner, and see how you approach the question with your sister."

"Parbleu! I'll approach it boldly, and a sharp *I will*, will make short work of all objections."

"Ah! my poor boy," said La Peyrade, bringing his hand down on his shoulder, "since Chrysale in *Les Femmes Savantes*, how many of these warlike blasts have we seen lower the flag before the will of a woman accustomed to lord it over them!"

"Well, we shall see!" said Thuillier, making a theatrical exit.

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His intense eagerness for the appearance of his pamphlet, and the doubt adroitly suggested concerning the inflexibility of his will, had transformed Thuillier into a raging tiger; he left La Peyrade in a state of mind to devote his whole household to fire and sword if they offered any resistance to him.

He broached the question to Brigitte as soon as he reached home. She, enlightened by her unvarnished common sense and her selfishness, observed that by thus anticipating the date originally fixed for the marriage, they would commit the mistake of disarming themselves; when the time for the election arrived they could not be sure that the advocate would exert himself as zealously as he might to bring about a successful result; it would be the same way, said the old maid, that it was with the Cross.

"There's a difference," said Thuillier; "the Cross isn't directly at La Peyrade's disposal, while he can do what he pleases with the influence he has succeeded in acquiring in the twelfth arrondissement."

"And suppose an ambitious fellow like him pleases to work on his own account, after we've feathered his nest for him?"

This danger did not fail to impress the future candidate, who professed to find some security in La Peyrade's moral character.

"A man's sensibilities aren't so very keen," retorted Brigitte, "when he keeps threatening to break with people, and this way of making us dance like griffins before a lump of sugar in order to get *your* pamphlet finished, doesn't suit me at all. Couldn't you get along without him by getting Phellion to help you? or perhaps, now I think of it, Madame de Godollo, who knows so many people in politics might find a newspaper man to take it up for you; they say they're all as poor as Job: for twenty crowns one of them would see the thing through."

"And let the secret be known to two or three people?" rejoined Thuillier. "No! I absolutely need La Peyrade; he feels it and makes his conditions. But, after all is said and done, we've promised him Céleste, and it is only putting it ahead a year at most; what am I saying? only a few months, or it may be weeks; the king has a way of dissolving the Chamber when no one expects it."

"But suppose Céleste won't have him?" objected Brigitte.

"Céleste! Céleste!" retorted Thuillier, "why, she must be made to do what we want her to. You ought to have thought of that when we made the agreement with La Peyrade, for our word is pledged, whatever you may say; besides he agrees that the child may choose between him and Phellion!"

"So that," queried the sceptical Brigitte, "you would still believe in La Peyrade's devotion, if Céleste should decide in Félix's favor?"

"What can I do? Those are his conditions. And

the rascal has taken everything into account too; he knows very well that Félix will never make up his mind to carry Céleste a ticket of confession, and that the little mummer will never accept him for a husband until he does. So La Peyrade is playing a very shrewd game."

"Too shrewd," retorted Brigitte; "however, fix it as you please; I wont meddle with it; all this trickery isn't to my taste."

Thuillier saw Madame Colleville and suggested to her that she must inform Céleste of their plans for her.

Céleste's sentiments for Félix Phellion had never received official sanction. On the other hand, Flavie had on a previous occasion expressly forbidden her to give the young professor any hope; but as she felt that she was upheld in her preference by Madame Thuillier, her godmother, the only person in whom she confided, she allowed herself to yield gradually to her inclinations, without paying much heed to the obstacles which her choice might some day encounter. When therefore it was signified to her that she must decide between Félix and La Peyrade, the innocent child thought of one only of the two horns of the dilemma, and she promised herself that she would perform a notably beneficent act by virtue of this arrangement which made it possible for her to dispose of her hand as her heart bade her do.

But La Peyrade was not at fault in his reckoning that, on the one side, the girl's religious intolerance, and, on the other, young Phellion's philosophical

inflexibility would prove insuperable obstacles to their union.

On the day when Flavie was instructed to communicate Thuillier's sovereign will to Céleste, the Phellions came to pass the evening with Brigitte, and a very sharp conflict took place between the young people. Mademoiselle Colleville did not need her mother's hint that it would be extremely ill-advised to employ the conditional approbation lately given to their feeling for each other as an argument in her controversy with Félix. Céleste had too much delicacy and too much religious ardor to desire to accomplish the conversion of the man she loved by any other process than conviction. So they passed the whole evening in theological discussions, and love is such a capricious creature, and may assume so many unexpected shapes, that, although he was dressed that day in a black dress and square cap he had not by any means the unprepossessing appearance one might imagine. But Phellion junior was unlucky to the last degree in this encounter, of the seriousness of which he had no conception. Not only would he concede nothing but he adopted an airy, ironical tone in discussion, and finally drove poor Céleste so beside herself, that she told him that everything was over between them, and forbade him to see her again.

This was the cue for a lover of more experience than the young scholar to see Céleste again the very next day, for a woman is never so near surrendering at discretion in an affair of the heart as at the

moment when she tells herself that an eternal separation is necessary.

But this law is not a logarithmic rule, and Félix Phellion, incapable of divining its existence, believed himself to be very seriously and positively proscribed; so that, during the fortnight allowed the maiden for deliberation, as the Code says in the matter of privileged successions, the ill-fated youth had not the slightest idea of breaking his ban, although he was expected from day to day and from minute to minute by Céleste, who thought no more of La Peyrade, by the way, than if he had been an utter stranger.

Luckily for this stupid lover a benevolent fairy was watching over him, and on the day preceding that on which Céleste was to announce her decision, matters fell out as follows:

It was a Sunday, the day of the week which the Thuilliers still devoted to stated receptions.

Being fully convinced that leakage—in vulgar parlance, servants' little pickings—brings destruction to the most solidly-established fortunes, Madame Phellion was in the habit of doing her own marketing. From time immemorial Sunday had been boiled dinner day in the Phellion household, and the wife of the great citizen, in the costume of studied negligence which housekeepers affect when they go to market, was returning most prosaically from the butcher's stall, followed by the cook, who had in her basket a magnificent shank-bone. Twice already she had rung her own door-bell, and a

terrible storm was gathering over the head of the little servant-girl, who, by her deliberation in answering the bell, was placing her mistress in a much less endurable situation than that of Louis XIV., who simply came near having to wait. In her feverish impatience Madame Phellion had just given the bell a third, awe-inspiring jerk. Fancy her confusion and agitation, when she saw a lady descend at that moment from a little coupé which drove noisily up to the door of her house, and when, in this unseasonably early visitor, she recognized the elegant Comtesse Torna de Godollo!

The poor woman's face became purple, she lost her head, and was floundering about in apologies, on the point of complicating her position, already intolerably false, by some supreme gaucherie; fortunately for her, Phellion's attention was attracted by the incessant jangling of the bell, and he came out of his study, attired in a dressing-gown with a Greek turban on his head, to see what was going on. After a few words whose pompous grandiloquence abundantly made up for the negligé costume which they were destined to excuse, the great citizen, with the serenity that never forsook him, gallantly offered his hand to the stranger and led her to a seat in the salon.

"Might I, without impertinence," he said, "inquire of Madame la Comtesse to what we are indebted for the unhoped-for honor of her visit?"

"I wished to talk with Madame Phellion," the Hungarian replied, "upon a subject in which she

must take the keenest interest. I have not had an opportunity to see her alone, and so, although I am hardly known to her, I have taken the liberty to intrude upon her here."

"How now! madame, you confer signal honor upon our humble abode.—But what can have become of Madame Phellion?" added the worthy man impatiently, walking toward the door.

"No, do not disturb her I beseech you," said the countess. "I have come awkwardly enough just when she is in the midst of her household duties. Brigitte is beginning to teach me with some success, and I know the respect due to the cares of housekeeping. Besides, I have no cause to complain as I have the compensation of your presence, which I did not count upon."

Before Phellion had time to reply to this complimentary speech, Madame Phellion appeared; a beribboned cap replaced her marketing-hat, and a capacious shawl concealed the other shortcomings of her morning toilet. As his wife entered the great citizen discreetly offered to retire.

"Monsieur Phellion," said the countess, "you are by no means an outsider in the conference I desired to have with madame; on the contrary, your excellent judgment can not fail to be of the greatest service in throwing light upon the question in which you are no less deeply interested than your worthy helpmeet; I refer to your son's marriage."

"My son's marriage!" echoed Madame Phellion in an amazed tone; "why I am not aware that

anything of the sort is in contemplation at this time."

"Monsieur Félix's marriage to Céleste," continued the countess, "is a thing that you desire, I am sure, even if you have no such plan?"

"We have taken no avowed steps to accomplish it," said Madame Phellion.

"I know it only too well," rejoined the Hungarian, "for every one in your family seems determined, on the other hand, to defeat my efforts; but, after all, one thing is certain, despite all the reserve and,—I won't mince my words,—all the bungling that has characterized the management of this affair, and that is that the young people love each other, and that they will both think it very hard if they don't eventually belong to each other; and the object of the step I decided this morning to take is to prevent that disaster."

"We cannot but be touched by the interest you take in our child's welfare, madame," said Phellion; "but, in truth, this interest—"

"Is so hard to explain," the countess quickly interposed, "that it makes you a little suspicious?"

"Oh! madame!" said Phellion, bowing with a respectful deprecatory air.

"Mon Dieu!" continued the Hungarian, "the explanation of what I have done is very simple. I have studied Céleste, and have discovered in the dear, innocent child a moral worth which would make me bitterly regret to see her sacrificed."

"Certainly," said Madame Phellion, "Céleste is an angel of sweetness."

"As to Monsieur Félix, I venture to take an interest in him also, in the first place, because he is the worthy son of one who is, in my eyes, the most virtuous of fathers—"

"Madame, I cry you mercy!" exclaimed Phellion, bowing again.

"But he also commends himself to me by the clumsiness of true love, which speaks out in his every word and his every act. We women take inexpressible delight in watching passion in a guise which lays us open neither to deception nor mistake."

"My son is not brilliant, it is true," said Madame Phellion, with a hardly perceptible tinge of acidity. "He is not a young man of fashion."

"But he has all the most essential qualities," rejoined the countess, "and merit which is ignorant of its own existence is the highest proof of intellectual superiority."

"In truth, madame," said Phellion, "you compel us to listen to things that—"

"Are nothing more than the truth," the countess interrupted. "Another reason for my passionate concern for the happiness of these young people, is that I am not at all concerned for that of Monsieur La Peyrade, who is false and self-seeking. That fellow is trying to found the success of his scheming upon the ruins of their hopes."

"Certain it is," said Phellion, "that there are

shadowy depths in Monsieur de la Peyrade, which it is very difficult for the light to penetrate."

"And as I was unfortunate enough to have a man of that stamp for my husband," continued Madame de Godollo, "the bare thought of the torture in store for Céleste in such a disastrous partnership, has caused me to yield, in the interest of their future welfare, to this charitable impulse, which perhaps no longer surprises you."

"We did not require, madame," said Phellion, "the more than satisfactory arguments with which you have cast light upon your conduct, but I confess, that in order to avoid committing similar mistakes in future, it would seem to me to be not altogether unprofitable to put your finger upon those by which we have nullified your generous efforts."

"How long is it," asked the countess, "since anyone of your family has crossed the Thuilliers' threshold?"

"Why, if my memory serves me," said Phellion, "we *were* there on the Sunday following the housewarming."

"That is to say, two full weeks of separation," said the Hungarian; "and do you think that nothing can happen in two weeks?"

"No, indeed; for three glorious days sufficed, in 1830, to overthrow a perjured dynasty, and to establish the order of things which now prevails."

"You see!" said the countess. "And that last evening did nothing take place between Céleste and your son?"

"Yes indeed," replied Phellion; "a very disagreeable dispute on the subject of Félix's religious opinions; for, if I must say it, dear Céleste, who is a charming creature in every other respect, seems to be a little fanatical in the matter of creed."

"I grant that," said the countess, "but she has been brought up by the mother whom you know, and no one has ever shown her the face of sincere piety; she has seen piety making wry faces, nothing more; repentant Madeleines of Madame Colleville's stamp always want to have the air of withdrawing to the desert in company with a death's head. They don't think they can procure salvation any cheaper than that. But, after all, what did Céleste ask Monsieur Félix to do? to read the *Imitation of Jesus Christ.*"

"He has read it, madame," replied Phellion; "he considers it a very well-written book, but his convictions, unfortunately, are not shaken in the slightest degree by what he read."

"And do you think it clever of him not to make for his mistress some trifling discount on the inflexibility of those same convictions?"

"My son, madame, has never had from me any lessons whatever on the subject of cleverness of that sort; loyalty and uprightness, those are the principles I have sought to inculcate."

"It seems to me, monsieur, that one shows no lack of loyalty, when, with a sore heart, one goes to work in the right way to avoid rubbing the sore; but, never mind; let us assume that Monsieur Félix

owes it to himself to play the part of the bar of iron, against which all Céleste's entreaties are shattered. Was that a reason why, after that scene, which was not the first of the same kind, and which assumed the proportions of a rupture, he should sulk in his tent for a fortnight, when he had an opportunity to meet her at any time in Brigitte's salon, absolutely neutral ground? Above all things should he have crowned his fit of the sulks by a proceeding which passes my comprehension, and which, when we found it out only a moment since, carried despair to Céleste's heart, and at the same time the keenest irritation?"

"My son capable of such a thing! impossible, madame!" cried Phellion, "I don't know what you refer to, but I have no hesitation in stating broadly that you are misinformed."

"And yet nothing can be more certain. Young Colleville, who comes home on Sundays, has just told us that Monsieur Félix, who used to give him lessons every other day with the greatest regularity, has paid no attention to him for more than a week. Unless your son is ill, I have no hesitation in saying that such a performance is the climax of stupidity. In his present situation with regard to the sister, he should have given the brother his lessons twice a day instead of selecting this moment to drop him."

The Phellions, husband and wife, looked at each other, as if to consult, before replying.

"My son, madame," said Madame Phellion, "is

not precisely sick; but, since you have put us on the right track by disclosing a fact which is, I agree, most peculiar, and a thousand leagues from his habits and character, I must admit that ever since the day when Céleste apparently intended to signify that all was at an end between them, something extraordinary has taken place in Félix; Monsieur Phellion and I are extremely troubled about it."

"Yes, madame," said Phellion, "the young man certainly is not in his right mind."

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the countess with interest.

"Why," said Phellion, "the very evening of the scene between them, after we came home my son poured a flood of scalding tears into his mother's bosom, giving us to understand that, in his opinion, the happiness of his life was at an end—"

"So far," said Madame de Godollo, "there's nothing unnatural; lovers always see things in their darkest light."

"Of course," said Madame Phellion; "but from that moment Félix has not made the slightest allusion to his misfortune, and the next day he returned to his work in a sort of frenzy; does that seem natural too?"

"It is susceptible of explanation: study is supposed to be a great comforter."

"Nothing is truer than that," said Phellion; "but in Félix's whole behavior there's a sort of excitement and concentration at the same time which you could hardly imagine. If you speak to him he

seems not to hear you; he sits down at the table and forgets to eat, or takes his food with an absent-minded air which the doctor considers very bad for the digestion; we have to remind him of his daily duties and occupations which he is ordinarily so regular about; why, the other day, while he was at the Observatory, where he goes now every evening and returns at most unseemly hours, I took it upon myself to go to his room and look over his papers: I was terrified, madame, to find a mass of paper covered with algebraic calculations carried out to such an extent that they seemed to me to be beyond the powers of any human mind."

"Perhaps," suggested the countess, "he is on the scent of some great problem."

"Or on the road to insanity," said Madame Phellion in a low voice—and with a heavy sigh.

"That is hardly probable," said Madame de Godollo; "a man with so tranquil a temperament and so straightforward a mind as his, is not a likely subject for a disaster of that sort. I know of one much more likely to befall him between this and to-morrow, if we don't strike a decisive blow to-night; —Céleste may be lost to him for good and all!"

"How so?" demanded the husband and wife in one breath.

"You may not know," continued the countess, "that Thuillier and his sister at one time made a definite agreement as to a marriage between Céleste and Monsieur de la Peyrade."

"We certainly suspected as much," said Madame Phellion.

"But the execution of the agreement was postponed to a remote period and made dependent upon certain conditions. Monsieur de la Peyrade, after putting them in the way to purchase the property near the Madeleine, was to obtain the Cross for Monsieur Thuillier, to write a political pamphlet in his name, and finally to procure him a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. It was something like the old romances of the days of knight-errantry, when the hero was required to exterminate some horrible monster, before he could aspire to the princess's hand."

"How witty madame is!" said Madame Phellion to her husband, who motioned to her not to interrupt.

"I haven't the time to spare," continued the countess, "and it would be useless, too, to tell you at length the adroit measures by which Monsieur de la Peyrade has undertaken to hasten the catastrophe; but there is this that it is important for you to know,—that, through his duplicity, Céleste has been called upon to choose between himself and Monsieur Félix; that the poor child was allowed a fortnight to reflect and make up her mind; that the fateful fortnight expires to-morrow, and that, thanks to the wretched frame of mind into which your son's attitude has thrown her, there is a very serious danger that she may sacrifice to the evil counsel of her loving anger her true sentiments and her genuine instincts."

"But what can we do, madame?" asked Phellion.

"Fight, monsieur! come in force this evening to Thuillier's and induce Monsieur Félix to come with you; preach to him until he relaxes a little the stiffness of his philosophical opinions. Paris is well worth a mass, said Henri IV.; but, better still, let him dodge all such questions; tell him to search his heart for words that will move a woman who loves him; to get the better of her in that way would be such a long stride! I will be there, and I will help with all my might; perhaps, under the inspiration of the moment I shall think up some way of making my assistance efficacious. At all events we will surely fight a great battle to-night, and if every one doesn't do his duty valorously, this La Peyrade may carry off the victory."

"My son isn't here, madame," rejoined Phellion, "and I regret it, for perhaps your earnestness and your warm words would have been successful in rousing him from his torpor; but, at all events, I will lay the matter before him in all its gravity, and I am very certain that he will go with us to call upon our friends, the Thuilliers, this evening."

"It is needless to remind you," added the countess rising, "that we must carefully avoid anything that might imply a previous understanding; we shall have no conference there, and unless the reconciliation is to be brought about in a perfectly natural way it would be better to have said nothing about it."

"Rely on my discretion, madame," said Phellion,

"and at the same time pray accept the assurance—"

"Of your most distinguished consideration," laughed the countess.

"No, madame," replied Phellion, gravely. "I reserve that formula for the conclusion of my letters, but pray believe that I feel for you the warmest and most unalterable gratitude."

"We will talk about that when we're out of danger," said Madame de Godollo, walking toward the door; "and if Madame Phellion, the most affectionate and most virtuous of mothers will deign to accord me a tiny place in her friendship, I shall esteem myself only too-well paid for my trouble."

Madame Phellion uttered a silly, far-fetched compliment. Phellion, having escorted the countess to her carriage, continued to salute her with the utmost respect long after she had driven away.

As the Latin quarter element became less assiduous in its attendance at Brigitte's salon and less prominent there, a more animated variety of Parisian life began to sift in. Among his colleagues in the General Council, and among the upper clerks at the Prefecture of the Seine, the municipal councillor enlisted several desirable recruits; the mayor of the arrondissement and his deputies, whom Thuillier had called upon when he moved into the neighborhood, made haste to return his civility, and it was the same with some of the commissioned officers of the first legion. The building itself had furnished its contingent, and several of the newly installed

tenants contributed by their presence to the rehabilitation of the Sunday receptions. Among the latter we must not omit to mention Rabourdin—See *The Civil Service*—the former chief of Thuillier's bureau at the Treasury Department. Having had the misfortune to lose his wife, whose salon, at an earlier date, eclipsed Madame Colleville's, Rabourdin occupied bachelor quarters on the third floor, above the apartment let to Cardot, the retired notary. In consequence of an outrageous piece of injustice, he had voluntarily quitted the public service. At the time when Thuillier fell in with him, he was manager of one of the projected railroads, the completion of which was constantly postponed by timidity and parliamentary rivalries. Let us say, in passing, that the reappearance in the Thuillier circle of this shrewd man of business, who had meanwhile become an important personage in the financial world, afforded the worthy and excellent Phellion a fresh opportunity to display the grandeur of his character. At the time when Rabourdin was driven to resign, Phellion alone among the clerks in his bureau remained true to him in his misfortune. Now that he was in a position where he had a goodly number of places at his disposal, Rabourdin, when he fell in with his *faithful friend* once more, lost no time in offering him an easy and at the same time lucrative berth.

"Môsieur," was Phellion's reply, "your good-will touches me and honors me, but my desire to be perfectly frank compels me to tell you something

which I beg you not to take in bad part; I don't believe in *chemins de fer*, or *railways*, as the English call them."

"You've a right to your opinion," said Rabourdin with a smile, "but meanwhile we pay our employés very well and I should be glad to have you with me in that capacity. I know by experience that you're a man to be relied on."

"Môsieur," replied the great citizen, "I did my duty at that time and nothing more; as for the offer you so kindly make me, I cannot accept it; content with my humble lot I neither desire nor deem it necessary to embark upon a business career, and I can say with the Latin poet:

"'Claudite jam rivos, pueri, sat prata biberunt.'"

Being thus reorganized in respect to its personnel, the Thuillier salon felt the need of another element of animation; to use the words of Madelon in *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, the *fearful hunger for amusement*, mentioned by Madame Phellion in her conversation with Minard, needed to be satisfied. Thanks to the efforts of Madame de Godollo, the great manageress, who cleverly made the most of Colleville's former connections in the musical world, an artist or two varied the monotony of bouillotte and boston. These two old-fashioned, unfashionable games soon surrendered the field to whist, which was, according to the Hungarian, the only legitimate resource of honest folk for killing time.

Like Louis XVI., who began by personally instituting the reforms by which his throne was finally overthrown, Brigitte at first encouraged all this internal revolution, and the necessity of suitably maintaining her position in the neighborhood in which she had decided to take up her abode had made her submit with docility to all suggestions in the direction of comfort and elegance. But, on the day when the scene was enacted at which we are now to assist, an incident, apparently of trivial importance, had revealed to her all the peril of the path she was treading.

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The majority of the new guests brought to the house by Thuillier were not aware of the supreme power wielded by his sister; and so, upon their arrival, they would ask Thuillier to present them to *Madame* and naturally Thuillier was disinclined to tell them that his wife was a do-nothing queen, groaning under the iron hand of a Richelieu from whom all authority emanated. So it was that the new-comers were not introduced to Brigitte until they had first paid their respects to the rightful sovereign, and the preternatural stiffness which impatience at her deposition imparted to her reception gave them but little encouragement afterward to put themselves out to any great extent to do her honor.

"If I don't look out," said Queen Elizabeth to herself, with the deep-seated instinct of domination which was the most ardent of her passions, "I shall be nobody here."

As she brooded over that idea, it occurred to her that the project of a joint household with La Peyrade, transformed into Céleste's husband, could not fail to complicate the situation which was beginning to arouse her anxiety. Thereupon, her mind took a sudden turn, and Félix Phellion, an estimable young man, too much engrossed with his mathematics ever to become a dangerous rival to her sovereignty,

appeared to her as a much more suitable match than the enterprising advocate; and so she was the first to express concern at the absence of Félix, when the elder Phellions made their appearance. Notwithstanding the step taken by Madame de Godollo, that stern lover had carried out the suggestion of the last line of Millevoye's famous elegy:

"And her lover came not."

As may readily be imagined, Brigitte was not alone in remarking the stiff-necked persistence with which the young man appeared to avoid her reception-days; Madame Thuillier, with innocent frankness, and Céleste, with feigned reserve, also expressed their disappointment. Madame de Godollo, who, although she had a very remarkable voice, had hitherto required much urging before she would consent to sing, voluntarily requested Madame Phellion to accompany her on the piano, when she saw how little heed Félix had apparently paid to her representations, and said to her between two measures of a romanza:

"Well, what about your son?"

"He is coming," Madame Phellion replied; "his father took him to task roundly, but there's a conjunction of some planets or other to-night; it is a great occasion for messieurs of the Observatory, and he couldn't miss it—"

"It is inconceivable how a man can be so stupid!" said the countess; "we hadn't enough theology in

the business, it seems, so we must needs bring in astronomy!"

Her impatience imparted unusual animation to her singing, and she finished her romanza amid what the English call thunders of applause.

La Peyrade, who was exceedingly suspicious of her, was not one of the last to approach and congratulate her when she resumed her seat; but she received his compliments with a coolness which amounted to discourtesy, so that their mutual hostility became the more bitter.

He went for consolation to Madame Colleville. Flavie still had too much pretension to beauty not to be the enemy of a woman whose physical attractions were of a sort to turn aside the homage of the other sex from herself.

"Are you like the rest in thinking that that woman sings well?" she asked the advocate in a contemptuous tone.

"I went and told her so, at all events," replied La Peyrade; because one isn't safe with Brigitte, except under her wing. But just look at Céleste; she doesn't take her eyes off the door, and you can see her disappointment in her face every time a tray comes in, although it is long past the time for callers to be announced."

We should state here, by the way, that since the reign of Madame de Godollo began, trays were passed about in the salon on reception-days, heavily laden with ices, little cakes and syrups from Tanrade, the most fashionable dealer.

"Leave me in peace!" said Flavie; "I know what the little idiot has in her mind, and your marriage will be arranged only too easily."

"But am I doing it for myself?" said La Peyrade; "isn't it rather a necessity that I submit to in order to make the future safe for us all? Come, come! here you are with tears in your eyes. I'll leave you, for you're not reasonable; what the devil! as that Prudhomme of a Phellion says, he who seeks an end must use the means thereto!"

He walked toward a group composed of Céleste, Madame Thuillier, Madame de Godollo, Colleville and Phellion.

Madame Colleville followed him, transformed into a ferocious mother by the jealous feeling she had just expressed.

"Céleste," said she, "why don't you sing? Several of these gentlemen would like to hear you."

"Oh! mamma," said Céleste, "to sing after madame with my poor little piping voice! I have a little cold, too, you know."

"That is to say, you choose to be affected and disobliging as you always are; every one sings as best she can, and every voice has its merits."

"My dear," said Colleville, who, having just lost twenty francs at cards, derived from his ill-humor sufficient courage to express an opinion opposed to his wife's; "every one sings as best she can is a bourgeois axiom; you sing with your voice when you have one, and you don't sing after listening to an operatic voice like Madame la Comtesse's;

I expressly exempt Céleste from warbling one of her lackadaisical little songs."

"It is well worth while," said Flavie, leaving the group, "to pay so much for masters to teach her to be good for nothing!"

"So Félix isn't living on earth any longer," said Colleville to Phellion, resuming the conversation that Madame Colleville's invasion had interrupted; "he's passing his life among the stars, is he?"

"My dear friend and former colleague," said Phellion, "I am, as you are, very much annoyed with my son for thus neglecting his family's oldest friends; and, although the contemplation of those immense luminous bodies suspended in space by the Creator's hand, presents, in my opinion, more attraction than you, enthusiast that you are, seem to believe, I think that Félix if he should not come this evening, as he promised me, would outrage propriety; and I should not mince matters with him, I promise you."

"Science is a fine thing," said La Peyrade, "but unfortunately it makes bears and maniacs."

"To say nothing of its destroying all ideas of religion," said Céleste.

"There you are wrong, my child," said the countess. "Pascal, who was himself a shining example of the falseness of your point of view, said, if I am not mistaken, that 'a little science leads us away from religion, but that a larger knowledge of it brings us back.' "

"And yet, madame," said Céleste, "everybody

agrees that Monsieur Félix is a great scholar; when he was coaching my brother, nothing could be so clear and easy to understand as his explanations, so François said; you see whether that makes him any more religious."

"I tell you, my dear little girl, that Monsieur Félix isn't irreligious, and that nothing would be easier than to bring him round with a little gentleness and patience."

"Bring a scientific man to conform to the ordinances of religion!" exclaimed La Peyrade; "that seems to me a difficult task, madame; those gentlemen place the object of their investigations above everything else. Go and tell a geometrician or a geologist, that the Church, for example, imperiously demands that the Sabbath Day be kept holy by laying aside every sort of work; it will simply make him shrug his shoulders, although God did not disdain to rest."

"It is true, too," said Céleste naively, "that by not coming this evening Monsieur Félix not only errs against the laws of courtesy, but commits a sin."

"But tell me, my love," said Madame de Godollo, "do you think God finds it much more agreeable to see us gathered here to sing operatic airs, eat ices and say evil things of one another, as is too frequently done in salons, than to see a scholar in an observatory engrossed in probing the marvelous secrets of creation?"

"There is time for everything," said Céleste,

"and as Monsieur de la Peyrade said, God himself didn't disdain to rest."

"But, my dear girl," said Madame de Godollo, "God had plenty of time; he is everlasting."

"That," interposed La Peyrade, "is one of the most charming and clever impieties imaginable, and worldly people quiet their consciences with such arguments. They construe and interpret God's commandments, even when they are most imperative and explicit; they take them up and put them aside, and draw fine distinctions; the free thinker submits them to his omniscient revision, and everyone knows whether it is a far cry from free thinking to free acting!"

During this harangue Madame de Godollo kept her eyes on the clock; it marked half-past eleven. The salon gradually emptied. A single game of cards was still in progress, participated in by Thuillier, the elder Minard and two of the new acquaintances of the house. Phellion had left the group with which he had been standing, to join his wife who was talking with Brigitte, and his energetic pantomime betrayed his feeling of profound indignation. Everything seemed to indicate that all hope of seeing the loiterer appear was finally abandoned.

"Monsieur," said the countess to La Peyrade, "do you do the gentlemen on Rue des Postes the honor of considering them good Catholics?"

"Most assuredly," said the advocate, "and our religion has no stauncher upholders."

"Very good; this morning," the countess continued, "I had the felicity to be received by Père Anselme. While he is a model of all the Christian virtues, the good father is also esteemed a very learned mathematician."

"I did not say, madame, that the two qualities were irreconcilable."

"But you said that a good Christian couldn't attend to any sort of work on Sunday, so Père Anselme must be a great sinner; when I was admitted to his room I found him standing in front of a blackboard with a piece of chalk in his hand, and trying to solve what must have been a very difficult problem, for the board was three-quarters covered with algebraic symbols. I may add that he didn't seem particularly disturbed about the scandal of the thing, for a person whom I cannot name, but who is a young scholar of great promise, was engaged in that profane occupation with him."

Céleste and Madame Thuillier exchanged glances, and each saw something like a gleam of hope in the other's eyes.

"Why can't you name this young scholar?" finally asked Madame Thuillier, who never was more skilful than that in concealing her thoughts.

"Because he has not, as Père Anselme has, the sanctity of his position to procure him absolution for such a flagrant desecration of the Sabbath; and then, too," added Madame de Godollo significantly, "he begged me not to say that I had met him in that place."

"Do you know many young scientists?" inquired Céleste; "for this one and Monsieur Phellion made two."

"My dear love," said the countess, "you're an inquisitive little thing, but you can't make me tell what I don't choose to tell, especially after what Père Anselme confided to me, for your imagination would at once be off at a gallop."

It was almost on the gallop now, and every word the countess spoke added to the girl's anxiety.

"For my part," said La Peyrade, ironically, "I shouldn't be at all surprised if Père Anselme's collaborator should prove to have been Monsieur Félix Phellion in person; Voltaire continued on excellent terms with the Jesuits, who educated him; but he didn't talk religion with them."

"Well, this young scientific friend of mine talks religion with his true brother in science, he refers his doubts to him,—indeed that was the starting-point of their scientific association."

"And doesn't Père Anselme hope to convert him?" asked Céleste.

"He is sure of doing so," the countess replied: "his young collaborator, aside from the religious training which he lacks, has been brought up in the most exemplary way; he knows, too, that his return to the fold would mean the happiness of a charming girl, whom he loves and who loves him. Now, my dear child, you can't make me say any more, and you can believe what you please."

"Oh! godmother!" cried Céleste, yielding to her innocent impulse, "suppose it was he!"

And she threw herself, weeping, into Madame Thuillier's arms.

At this juncture matters became more complicated than ever, when the servant opened the door of the salon and announced Monsieur Félix Phellion.

The young professor entered the room in a reeking perspiration, gasping for breath, and with his cravat awry.

"A pretty time to make your appearance!" said Phellion sternly.

"I couldn't leave before the end of the phenomenon, father," said Félix walking toward that part of the room where Madame Thuillier and Céleste were sitting together. "I didn't find a carriage so I ran all the way."

"Your ears must have burned on the way," said La Peyrade with a knowing look, "for you were a subject of discussion a moment ago among these ladies, who had set about solving a difficult problem concerning you."

Félix made no reply; he saw Brigitte coming from the dining-room, where she had been to tell the servant to pass no more refreshments; and he ran to salute her.

After listening to a few words of reproof as to his infrequent visits, and receiving his pardon with a very amiable, *better late than never,* he turned back toward his magnet, and was greatly surprised when Madame de Godollo addressed him.

"Monsieur," said she, "you must forgive me for an indiscretion which in the excitement of the discussion I was led to commit: I told these ladies, notwithstanding your express prohibition, where I met you this morning."

"Where I had the honor to meet you," said Félix; "why, madame, in that case I did not see you."

An imperceptible smile played about La Peyrade's lips.

"You saw me so plainly that you spoke to me, and requested me to preserve the most absolute secrecy. However, I didn't compromise you by stretching the truth; I said that you sometimes saw Père Anselme, and that, thus far, your relations with him had been strictly scientific, but that you defended your scepticism against his arguments as well as against Céleste's."

"Père Anselme,"—said Phellion stupidly.

"Why, yes, of course," said La Peyrade; "a great mathematician who doesn't despair of converting you; Mademoiselle Céleste wept for joy."

Félix stared vacantly from one to another. Madame de Godollo glared at him with an expression in her eyes a poodle would have understood.

"I would have liked," he said at last, "to do a thing so agreeable to Mademoiselle Céleste, but I think you are mistaken, madame."

"Listen to me, monsieur; I propose to state the whole truth, and if your false shame impels you to the desperate expedient of concealing a proceeding in which there is nothing you might not admit,

since it has made those who love you happy,—why contradict me; I shall lay myself open to the charge of fickleness by divulging a secret which you, I agree, most urgently enjoined me to keep."

Madame Thuillier and Céleste were in themselves as good as a play; never were doubt and suspense so eloquently expressed upon the human countenance.

"I told these ladies," continued Madame de Godollo," carefully weighing every word, "because I knew how interested they are in your spiritual welfare, and because you have been accused of audacious disobedience to God's commandments by working on Sunday, that I met you this morning at the establishment on Rue des Postes, in Père Anselme's room, he being a scholar like yourself, and that you were at work with him solving a problem; I said that your scientific relations with that holy and enlightened man had led you to talk upon other subjects; that you had submitted your religious doubts to him and that he did not despair of clearing them up for you. There can be nothing in your confirmation of what I have said to lower your self-esteem; it is simply a surprise you were preparing for Céleste, and I was awkward enough to let it out; but when she hears you say that I told the truth, you will make her happy enough to pay you for not haggling over the word she's waiting for."

"Come, monsieur!" said La Peyrade, "there's never anything absurd in seeking for light; you, who are so straightforward and so opposed to

falsehood, cannot deny what madame maintains so stoutly."

"Mademoiselle Céleste," said Félix, after a moment's hesitation, "will you allow me to say just two words to you, alone?"

Céleste rose as Madame Thuillier nodded her assent. Félix took her hand and led her to a window within two yards of where they were sitting.

"Céleste," said he, "I beg of you, wait a little longer. Look," he added, pointing to the constellation of the Chariot, "beyond yon visible stars there is a whole future for us. As to Père Anselme, I can not admit what you have heard, because it isn't true. It's pure fiction; but be patient, and you will learn some things!—"

Céleste left his side, and he remained gazing at the sky.

"He is mad!" exclaimed the girl in a despairing tone as she returned to her seat beside Madame Thuillier. And Félix confirmed her prognosis by rushing from the salon, heedless of the emotion of Phellion and his mother as they started in pursuit.

While everybody was recovering from the stupefying effect of this exit, La Peyrade respectfully drew near Madame de Godollo, and said to her:

"Confess, madame, that it is very hard to pull a man out of the water when he is determined to drown."—

"I had no idea," replied the countess, "that anybody could be so simple; he is altogether too great a blockhead. I go over to the enemy, and whenever

the enemy pleases I am ready to have a frank and loyal understanding with him in my apartments."

The next morning Théodose was possessed with curiosity upon two points: How would Céleste extricate herself from the option she accepted? What had this Comtesse Torna de Godollo to say to him, and what did she want of him?

The former of the two subjects of interest seemed to him incontestably entitled to precedence; and yet a secret instinct inclined La Peyrade more strongly toward attempting a solution of the second problem. But, when making up his mind to follow that inclination first, he realized that he could not look to his weapons too carefully in preparation for the meeting to which he had been invited.

It had rained in the early morning, and the profound schemer was fully aware of the discredit into which a man might fall on account of a splash of mud marring the polish of a boot. He therefore sent his concierge out for a cab, and about three o'clock left Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer for the more fashionable latitude of the Quartier de la Madeleine.

Of course considerable care had been bestowed upon his costume, which was intended to be a happy medium between the undress suitable for morning wear, and the ceremonious after-dinner costume. Indissolubly attached, by virtue of his profession, to the white cravat which he never laid aside except upon very rare occasions, and not daring to make his appearance in anything but a dress-coat, he felt

that he was inclining toward one of the extremes, which it seemed to him that he ought to avoid. But with his coat buttoned, and the straw-colored glove replaced by one of a lighter shade, he looked less solemn, and avoided the provincial solicitor aspect of a drawing-room toilet paraded through the streets before the sun has sunk below the horizon.

The shrewd diplomatist knew too much to be driven to the door of the house which was his destination. He preferred not to be seen from the entresol alighting from a hired carriage, and he was unwilling to be seen from the first-floor paying a visit on the floor below; such a proceeding on his part would inevitably be followed by endless comments.

He was careful, therefore, to alight at the corner of Rue Royale, and reached the house without mishap, —the sidewalks being nearly dry—by walking on tiptoe. When he arrived at the door he had the good luck not to be seen by the concierges; the husband, a beadle at the Madeleine, was absent attending to his duties, and the wife was showing a vacant suite to a possible tenant; and so, unseen by anyone, Théodose glided to the door of the sanctuary he proposed to enter.

A slight touch of the hand to a silken cord, adorned with tassels, caused a bell to ring inside. A few seconds elapsed, and then he heard a more decided peal upon another bell of smaller calibre, which sounded to him like a warning to the maid-servant, who was too slow about answering the bell to suit

her mistress. A moment later, a lady's maid of mature years and too sensible to affect the costume of the soubrettes of the stage, confronted him.

The advocate declined to give his name, and the maid requested him to wait in a dining-room, furnished luxuriously but not gaudily. Almost immediately she returned and ushered him into the daintiest and most beautiful salon that it is possible to imagine under the squat ceiling of an entresol.

The divinity of the place was seated by a table covered with a cloth of Venetian design, wherein the changing hues of gold were mingled with the brilliant colors of small-stitch tapestry. As the advocate entered she bowed without rising, and said, as the maid pushed forward a chair for him:

"Will you allow me to finish an important letter, monsieur?"

The advocate bowed in token of assent; the fair stranger thereupon took from a desk inlaid with tortoise-shell, of the Boulle type, a sheet of sky-blue English paper and placed it in an envelope; having written the address, she rose and rang.

The maid instantly appeared, lighted a spirit-lamp set into a small, beautifully carved desk; above the lamp was arranged a sort of melting-pot in silver-gilt, wherein a stick of perfumed sealing-wax was waiting; as soon as the heat of the flame had melted the wax, the maid turned it out on the envelope and handed the seal with her crest cut upon it, to her mistress. She made the impression with her fair hands, and said:

"Send this without delay to its address."

The maid came forward to take the letter, but, whether because she was careless or in too great haste, the paper fell at La Peyrade's feet, and as he stooped quickly to pick it up he instinctively read the superscription. It read: *His Excellency, the Minister for Foreign Affairs.* And higher up, in one corner, the significant word: *Personal*, which imparted a distinctly private character to the missive.

"Pardon, monsieur," said the countess, taking the letter from the advocate,—for he had the good taste to pass it through its mistress's hands in a way to exhibit his eagerness to be of service.

"Be good enough, mademoiselle, not to lose it altogether," she added sharply, addressing the unlucky maid. Having thus dismissed her, the Hungarian left her former seat at the writing-table and sat down upon a couch covered with pearl-gray satin.

During this little scene La Peyrade had had the pleasure of taking a hasty inventory of his magnificent surroundings. Pictures by the great masters standing out in relief against hangings with a dark background brightened by silk lace and tassels; an immense Japanese vase upon a gilt stand; at the windows two jardinières wherein a *lilium rubrum* with shriveled petals towered above white and red camellias and Chinese dwarf magnolias with cream-white flowers, with a fringe of bright red poppies; in a recess, a stand of arms containing some of the most curious and richest weapons ever seen, whose presence was explained by the nationality,

always somewhat eccentric of the mistress of the place; lastly, a few bronzes and statuettes selected with exquisite taste, and in the chairs which moved noiselessly over a rich Turkish carpet, a bewildering variety of shapes and coverings,—such was the furnishing of this salon, which the advocate had had occasion to inspect, with Brigitte and Thuillier, before it was occupied. It was so transfigured that he could not have recognized it.

If he had been a little more accustomed to fashionable society La Peyrade would have been less surprised at the extraordinary pains the countess had expended upon the decoration of this retreat. A woman's salon is her kingdom, the kingdom in which she is absolute mistress; for there, in the full meaning of the word, she reigns and governs; there she fights many a battle, and almost always comes forth victorious. For has she not selected all the ornaments of her salon, arranged all its colors in harmony, and does she not distribute light and shade there at her will? However awkward a mechanic she may be, it is impossible that, where every object that surrounds her has been arranged by her own hand, she should not appear at her full value; impossible that every advantage she can boast should not stand out in bold relief. Say, if you please, that you do not know all a woman's perfections when you have not seen her in the prismatic atmosphere of her salon, but be careful also not to pretend to know her and to pass judgment upon her when you have seen her nowhere else.

Coquettishly buried in one corner of the couch, her head resting carelessly upon an arm whose shape and snowy whiteness the eye could follow nearly to the elbow in the flowing sleeve of her black velvet robe de chambre; her Cinderella-like foot comfortably ensconced in a tiny Russia leather slipper, and resting upon a cushion of orange satin, with raised flowers, the fair Hungarian looked like one of Lawrence's or Winterhalter's portraits, plus the studied innocence of the pose.

"Monsieur," said she smilingly, with a slight foreign accent which lent an additional charm to her words, "I can not help looking upon it as a great joke that a man of your intelligence and your rare penetration should have been able to look upon me as an enemy."

"But, Madame la Comtesse," replied La Peyrade, with an expression of amazement mingled with distrust, in his eye, "you must agree that appearances were all on the side of my foolishness. A rival crosses my path in the matter of a marriage which everything combines to make an advantageous and suitable one for me. He does me the favor to show himself miraculously stupid and not at all difficult to put out of the way, when lo! the most charming and most unhoped for of allies appears and devotes herself to the task of protecting him on the very ground on which he is most vulnerable.—"

"Confess that my protégé is a clever fellow," laughed the countess, "and that he seconded my efforts nobly!"

"His awkwardness was not, I fancy, wholly unexpected by you, and the protection with which you deign to honor him is the more cruel to me on that account."

"What a great misfortune it would be," retorted the foreigner with a fascinating pout, "if you should be relieved from the necessity of marrying Mademoiselle Céleste! So monsieur, you're bent upon having this boarding-school miss?"

In the words, and especially in the tone in which they were uttered, there was something more than disdain, there was hatred. This fact did not escape so close an observer as La Peyrade. However, as he was not the man to presume overmuch upon that remark alone, he said:

"Madame, the vulgar expression, *to make an end of it*, sums up the situation in which a man, who has struggled vainly for a long time, finding himself at the end of his strength and his illusions, is glad to make a compromise of any sort with his future. Now, when the end presents itself in the shape of a young girl, more conspicuous for virtue than for beauty, I admit, but who will bring her husband the fortune that is indispensable to the well-being of every conjugal partnership, why is it surprising that the heart should allow itself to be led by gratitude, and should welcome the probability of tranquil happiness which seems to offer itself to him?"

"I had always thought," the countess replied, "that the extent of one's intelligence should be the measure of his ambition, and I imagined that a man

so profoundly shrewd as to be content to be known at first only as the poor man's lawyer, had less humble and less pastoral aspirations."

"Why, madame," rejoined La Peyrade, "the iron hand of necessity makes one resigned to strange things; the question of daily bread is one of those before which everything bends and prostrates itself. Was not Apollo, *in order to live*, obliged to become Admetus' shepherd?"

"But Admetus' sheepfold," suggested Madame de Godollo, "was, at all events, a royal sheepfold; and Apollo certainly didn't humble himself so far as to herd cattle for a—bourgeois.

The pause introduced by the lovely stranger in her sentence seemed to imply the omission of a proper name, and La Peyrade understood that, purely through her kindness of heart, Thuillier was left out of the argument, which confined itself to the class, instead of narrowing itself down to the individual.

"I think, madame, that there is no less truth than shrewdness in your distinction," replied La Peyrade, "but it is not for Apollo to choose."

"I don't like people who charge too much," said the countess drily, "but I care still less for those who sell their wares below their market value; I am always afraid that they'll take me in with some cunning, complicated knavery. You know your own worth, monsieur, and your hypocritical humility is intensely distasteful to me; it proves to my mind that my well-meant overtures have

not produced even a beginning of confidence between us."

"I swear to you, madame, that my life thus far has not justified me in believing myself possessed of any striking superior qualities."

"In truth," said the Hungarian, "perhaps we must recognize the modesty of a man who accepts the pitiful dénoûment which I tried to prevent."

"Just as we must recognize the sincerity of a friendly feeling which had up to that time so persistently abused me, in order to save me," retorted La Peyrade cunningly.

The Hungarian glanced reproachfully at the young man; crumpling one of the ribbons of her dress in her hand, she cast down her eyes, and heaved a sigh, so light and so nearly inaudible, that it might have passed for a mere incident of the most regular respiration.

"You are spiteful, monsieur," said she, "and judge everybody from the same standpoint. After all," she added, as if upon reflection, "you are justified perhaps in reminding me that I went a good deal out of my way to interfere so foolishly in matters in which I have no interest. Go on, my dear monsieur, with your glorious marriage, which seems to you to combine so many advantages, and allow me only to hope that you may not have reason to repent a victory which I shall no longer try to postpone."

The Provençal had not become a spoiled child in the matter of love affairs. The poverty against

which he had long struggled did not put him much in the way of amorous adventures, and since he had shaken off its rude embrace, he had devoted himself so entirely to the difficult task of building up his future, that, except for the comedy played with Madame Colleville, he had allotted to affairs of the heart a very minute space in his life. Like all extremely busy men, who are at the same time possessed by the demon of lust, he had contented himself with the ignoble ready-made love which can be found waiting any evening on the public squares, and which is so conveniently reconciled with a pious exterior. We can, therefore, imagine the perplexity of this novice in intrigue, when he found himself hemmed in between the fear of allowing a most entrancing opportunity to escape him, and the fear of finding a serpent in the midst of the flowers which seemed to be opening beneath his hand. If his reserve were too marked, his ardor too lukewarm, he might wound the fair foreigner's self-esteem, and suddenly dry up the spring at which she seemed to invite him to drink; but, on the other hand, suppose that her apparent interest was only a snare; that the good-will, so inadequately explained, which had suddenly been bestowed upon him, had no other object than to involve him in some false step which she could afterward use as a weapon against him, to compromise him with the Thuillier's,—what a blow to his reputation for cleverness, and what a part for him to play,—that of the dog dropping his prey to seize the shadow!

We know already that La Peyrade belonged to the Tartuffe school, and the frankness with which the master declares to Elmire that, without some proof of her favors *after which* he sighs, he is unable to put faith in her affectionate overtures, seemed to the advocate, with the addition of a little more suavity of speech, very properly applicable to the present circumstances.

"Madame la Comtesse," said he, "you make of me a man much to be pitied; I was going gaily on to this marriage, and you take away my faith in it; and when I have broken it off, what use do you suggest that I, with my great capacity, can make of my recovered liberty?"

"La Bruyère said, if I am not mistaken, that nothing stirs the blood so effectually as to have avoided doing a foolish thing."

"Agreed; but that is a negative advantage, and my age and financial condition are such that I have to fix my mind upon more serious considerations. The interest you take in me can hardly stop with the desire to see my slate wiped clean. I love Mademoiselle Céleste with a love in which there is nothing imperious or dominating, to be sure, but still I love her, her hand is promised to me, and before giving her up—"

"In that case," interposed the countess hastily, "under certain circumstances you wouldn't be averse to a rupture, and," she added more calmly, "one might have some chance of making you understand that by grasping thus at the first opportunity, you

IN THE PLACE DE LA MADELEINE

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endanger your whole future, and that there may be other available *partis?*"

"It would be necessary, madame, that I should at least have some premonition of them, have a glimpse of them."

This perseverance in demanding pledges seemed to annoy the countess.

"Faith, monsieur," said she, "is a virtue only because it believes upon the word alone. You doubt yourself, which is another form of *gaucherie*. I am not fortunate in my protégés."

"But, after all, madame, is it very impertinent in me to insist upon knowing, at least in a vague way, what fate you in your kindness of heart have dreamed of for me?"

"Very impertinent," replied the Hungarian coldly, "for I can easily see that you promise docility only upon conditions. Let us say no more about it. You have gone a good way with Mademoiselle Colleville, she is well adapted to you in many ways, so marry her; once more I say, you won't find me in your path again."

"But, is Mademoiselle Colleville really well adapted to me?" rejoined La Peyrade; "that's just the point as to which you awoke my doubts just now! And don't you think it rather cruel to make two contradictory assertions in quick succession without any proof in support of either?"

"Ah!" said the countess impatiently, "you require facts to justify my opinion! Very well, monsieur, there's one most conclusive fact which I

can swear to the truth of: Céleste doesn't love you."

"Indeed," said La Peyrade humbly, "I am inclined to think that I am on the road to a marriage of convenience."

"And she can't love you," continued Madame de Godollo with more animation, "because she can't understand you. Her true husband is that little light-haired fellow, who is as shy and insipid as she is herself; from the contact of these two lifeless, cold natures will result the mutual lukewarm affection which in the opinion of the circle in which she was born and has lived, constitutes the *ne plus ultra* of conjugal felicity. Try to make the little idiot understand that fortune, when it has the good luck to fall in with talent on its road, ought to consider itself much honored by the meeting! Or, better still, make the disgusting, hateful crowd she has about her understand it! And you think of resting from your hard toil and your probation under the roof of a rich bourgeois; and you believe that your contribution will not be compared twenty times a day with their contribution of money to the partnership, and be voted outrageously inadequate! On one side the *Iliad*, the *Cid*, the *Freischutz*, and the *Frescoes of the Vatican;* on the other a hundred thousand crowns in good honest coin; tell me in which direction their admiration will turn? Do you know to whom I compare the artist, the man of imagination groveling in the bourgeois atmosphere? To Daniel cast into the lions' den, without

the miraculous rescue of which the Scriptures tell us."

This invective against the bourgeoisie was uttered in a tone of earnest conviction which could hardly fail to be contagious.

"Ah! madame," cried La Peyrade, "how eloquently you express things that have often come to my mind! but I have always felt compelled to submit by that cruel fatality, the necessity of maintaining my position—"

"Necessity! position!" the countess broke in, raising the earnestness of her tone still more, "senseless words, which no longer have any sound in the ears of intelligent people, but which turn fools back as effectually as the strongest fortifications. Necessity! does such a thing exist for exceptional natures, for those who know what they want? A Gascon minister once uttered an aphorism which should be carved on the gateway of every career: 'Everything comes in time to the man who knows how to wait.' Don't you know, pray, that with men of superior mould marriage is either a chain that binds them to the most hopelessly commonplace existence, or a pair of wings that transports them to the highest peaks of society? The woman you must have, monsieur, and for whom you may not, perhaps, have long to wait, unless you are in an incredible hurry to surrender to the first *dot* that falls in your way, is one who is capable of understanding you because she can divine your aspirations; one who will work with you, who will

be your confidante in matters of the intellect, and not a mere animated stew-pan; one who will be your secretary to-day and may be to-morrow the wife of a possible deputy or ambassador; in fine, one who will be ready to offer you her love for motive power, her salon for a stage, her connections for a ladder, and who, in return for all she brings you in the way of impulse and power, will ask nothing more than to stand beside your throne, in the bright light of the glory and prosperity she had foreseen for you!"

Intoxicated in a measure by her own eloquence, the Hungarian was superb; her eyes sparkled and her nostrils were dilated; she seemed to see the panorama which her burning words unfolded, and to touch it with her trembling hands. For a moment La Peyrade was dazzled by the bright rays of this new sun rising upon his life.

However, as he was an extremely prudent young man, who made it a rule never to lend except upon sound and abundant security, he was inclined to seek further light on the situation.

"Madame la Comtesse," said he, "you reproached me just now for speaking like a bourgeois, and I, for my part, am very much afraid that you are speaking like a goddess. I admire you, and I listen to you with pleasure, but I am not convinced. Such devotion, such sublime self-sacrifice may be found in heaven perhaps; but who can boast of having been the beneficiary of anything of the sort on earth?"

"You are mistaken, monsieur," said the countess solemnly; "such devotion is rare, but it is neither incredible nor impossible; one must simply have the faculty of finding it, and above all, of keeping fast hold of it when it is offered you."

Thereupon she rose majestically.

La Peyrade understood that he had at last disgusted her, and that he was dismissed; he also rose, bowed respectfully, and asked the favor of being allowed to call occasionally.

"Monsieur," replied Madame de Godollo, "among us Hungarians,— we are a primitive people, almost barbarians, you know,—when a door is opened it is opened wide; but when we close it, we double lock it."

This dignified but ambiguous retort was accompanied by a slight inclination of the head. Confused and giddy with her manœuvring, which was so new and strange to him, and so unlike the ways of Flavie and Brigitte and Madame Minard, La Peyrade left the house, wondering if he had played a strong game.

After leaving Madame de Godollo, La Peyrade felt the need of serious reflection. What ought he to see behind the conversation he had had with that extraordinary woman: a trap, or a rich match offered him? In his uncertainty, it would be neither wise nor prudent to press Céleste to pronounce her decision; for him to ask her to do so was to enter into an engagement himself, and to close the door to the chances, ill-defined as yet, which had been held out to him.

The result of Théodose's consultation with himself as he walked along the boulevard, was that he must think of nothing at the moment but gaining time; and so, instead of appearing at the Thuilliers', he returned home and sent the following note:

"My dear Thuillier,

"I am sure you won't think it strange that I haven't called upon you to-day; not only do I dread the decree to be pronounced, but I do not want to appear like an impatient, ill-bred creditor. A few days more or less make little difference in such a matter, and yet Mademoiselle Colleville may find them useful in helping her to make up her mind with absolute freedom. So I shall not see you until you have written me. I have found leisure to add a few pages to our manuscript, and we shall need but little more time before we shall be ready to turn it all over to the printer.

"Yours ever,

"Théodose de la Peyrade."

Two hours later, the *male* servant spoken of by Minard, dressed in a costume which was evidently a step toward the livery they had not yet decided to risk, brought the advocate a reply in these words:

"Come this evening without fail; we'll talk it all over with Brigitte.

"Your affectionate, devoted friend,

"Jérôme Thuillier."

"Good!" said La Peyrade to himself, "the affair evidently isn't running smoothly, and I shall have time to turn round."

In the evening, when he was announced at the Thuilliers', the Comtesse de Godollo, who was with Brigitte at the moment, hastily rose and took her leave. As she passed the advocate she bowed ceremoniously to him. There was no definite conclusion to be drawn from her abrupt departure, which might mean anything.

After exchanging a few words about the weather, as people do who have met to discuss a delicate matter as to which they are not sure of being in accord, the conversation was opened by Brigitte, who had sent her brother to take a turn on the boulevard, bidding him let her manage the business.

"My boy," said she, "it was very proper of you not to come like a harpy and hold a pistol at our heads, for we weren't quite ready to answer you. I think," she added, taking her metaphor from her old business of bill-discounting, "that Céleste will need a short renewal."

"Then she hasn't decided in favor of Monsieur Félix Phellion?" exclaimed La Peyrade eagerly.

"You rascal!" retorted the old maid; "you settled that business last night; but you don't need to be told that she has a little weakness in that direction."

"Who wouldn't see it," said the advocate, "unless he was blind?"

"However, that's no obstacle to my plans," continued Mademoiselle Thuillier, "but it will explain why I ask you for a little credit for Céleste, and also why I wanted to postpone the marriage to a later date. I wanted to give you time to work your way into the little one's heart; but you and Thuillier between you upset my plans."

"Nothing is done, I fancy, without your consent," said La Peyrade, "and my reason for saying nothing to you during this last fortnight was simply that I didn't want to interfere; Thuillier told me that everything was agreed between you."

"Thuillier knows perfectly well, on the contrary, that I wouldn't meddle with all your schemes, and perhaps I should have been the first to tell you I didn't approve of them, if you hadn't made yourself so scarce lately. However, I can safely say that I haven't done anything to prevent their success."

"That wasn't enough," said La Peyrade, we needed your assistance."

"Possibly; but I know women better than you, being one of 'em myself, and I suspected that, in this having lovers to choose between, Céleste would see nothing more than permission to think at her leisure of the one she liked best—whereas, I had always left her in uncertainty about Félix because I knew when it would be time to bring her to her little senses."

"So she refuses me, does she?" said La Peyrade.

"It's much worse than that; she accepts you, saying that she has given her word; but it's easy

to see that she looks upon herself as a victim, so that I shouldn't feel very much flattered or reassured by such a victory, if I were in your place."

In a different frame of mind La Peyrade would have replied that he accepted the sacrifice and that it would be his business to win the heart which, at the moment, was given him grudgingly; but a little delay suited him very well, so he said to Brigitte:

"What is your opinion? what shall I decide to do?"

"In the first place," said Brigitte, "to finish Thuillier's pamphlet, because he's losing his wits over it; and after that you must let me look after your interests."

"But are they in friendly hands? for I can't shut my eyes to the fact, my little aunt, that you've been very different to me of late."

"I, different to you! what makes you think that, you dreamer?"

"Oh! there are little things," said La Peyrade; "but it's very evident that, since this Comtesse Torna found her way into your family—"

"My poor boy, the Hungarian has done me various favors, and I am grateful to her: is that a reason, I'd like to know, for me not to be grateful to you, who have done us much greater ones?"

"Confess that she has told you much evil about me," said La Peyrade cunningly.

"It's easy to account for all she said to me: great ladies like her must have everybody bowing down to them, and she knows that you're wrapped up in

Céleste; but everything she could say to me rolled off like water from oil-cloth."

"So I can still rely on you, little aunt?" demanded La Peyrade.

"Yes, if you don't worry me to death, and will let me have my own way."

"Well! what will you do?" said La Peyrade good-humoredly.

"First of all I'll let Félix know that he isn't to put his foot in my house again."

"Is it possible?" said the advocate, "or, at all events, is it advisable?"

"Very possible, and I'll send word to him by Phellion himself. His principles are his hobby-horse, and he'll be the first to acknowledge that his son had better deprive us of his presence if he won't do what's necessary to obtain Céleste's hand."

"What then?" queried La Peyrade.

"Then, I'll tell Céleste that we left her free to choose one husband or the other, and as she won't have Félix, she must put up with you,—that you're a pious fellow, just the sort she likes. Never you fear, I'll work your generosity in not taking advantage of her agreement for all it's worth, I tell you; but all this will take time; and if we have to wait a week longer for the pamphlet to be done, Thuillier's in such a state that we may have to send him to Charenton before then."

"The pamphlet can be ready in two days; but can I be sure that we're playing on the square, little aunt? Mountains never meet, they say, but men

may; and it's certain that when the election comes I shall be able to help Thuillier or hinder him as I please. The other day I had a terrible fright, do you know. I had a letter in my pocket in which he spoke of the pamphlet as being written by me. For a moment I was afraid I'd lost the letter at the Luxembourg. There'd have been a pretty how-d'ye-do in the quarter, I fancy!"

"Am I likely to try any mischief with a sly rascal like you?" said the old maid, with a perfect understanding of the threat contained in the last sentence, naturally as it was brought into the conversation. "But, after all," she added, "have you any fault to find with us? Aren't you the one who has fallen short of your promises? How about the Cross we were to have in a week, and the pamphlet that was to have appeared long ago?"

"The pamphlet and the Cross will come out all right, one bringing the other," replied La Peyrade rising to go. "Tell Thuillier to come and see me to-morrow night, and I think we can correct the last sheet. But be sure and not lend too willing an ear to Madame de Godollo's slanders: I have an idea that she wants to alienate all your friends in order to make herself supreme in the house, and that she's got her eye on Thuillier at the same time."

"Faith," said the old maid, whom the malicious advocate's parting shot wounded in her most sensitive spot, her autocracy, "I must pay some attention to what you tell me: the little lady is a bit of a flirt!"

La Peyrade reaped still another advantage from his adroit insinuation: Brigitte's reply convinced him that the countess had not mentioned the visit he had paid her during the day. Her reticence on that subject might mean a great deal.

*

Four days later, the printer, the stitcher and the hot-presser having done their work, Thuillier, in the evening, was able to treat himself to the inexpressible delight of a walk beginning at the boulevards, and continued through all the by-ways as far as the Palais-Royal. He cast a glance in every bookseller's window as he passed, and read upon a flaming yellow poster, the famous title:

TAXES AND THE SINKING-FUND

BY J. THUILLIER

Member of the General Council of the Seine

Having succeeded in persuading himself that, by the care he had bestowed upon the proofs, he had earned the right to appropriate the work, his paternal heart, like Master Corbeau's, could not feel itself beat for joy. We must add that he held in utter contempt those publishers who did not offer this *novelty* for sale, destined, as he firmly believed, to be an epoch-marking event in the history of Europe. Without quite satisfying himself as to how he could punish their indifference, he took note of the refractory establishments, feeling as bitter a

grudge against them as if he had received a direct affront.

The next day he passed most blissfully in composing a large number of letters of transmittal, and in placing in their wrappers some fifty or more copies, to which the sacramental phrase, *"With the compliments of the author,"* written by his own hand, seemed to him to impart inestimable value.

But the third day after the sale began he experienced something of a shock. He had taken for publisher a young man who had plunged recklessly into the business, and had recently opened a shop in the Passage des Panoramas, where he paid a ruinous rent. A nephew of Barbet, the bookseller who was Brigitte's tenant in the building on Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and whose notes she used to discount, this Barbet *junior* was a youngster who was afraid of nothing, and when he was introduced to Thuillier by his uncle, he undertook, provided he was not restricted in the matter of advertising, to make a second edition necessary at the end of a week.

Now Thuillier had expended nearly fifteen hundred francs in purchased publicity; copies had been sent in profusion to the newspapers, and after three days had passed the sales amounted to SEVEN copies, and, out of that number, three were taken on credit.

One might imagine that in making known this pitiful result to the dismayed Thuillier, the young publisher would have lost something of his assurance. On the other hand this Guzman of the book trade remarked:

"I am delighted at what has happened. If we had sold a hundred copies, I should be uneasy about the fifteen hundred we printed; I should say that would look like a long story, whereas, this very insignificant sale convinces me that the whole edition will be snapped up at one mouthful."

"But when?" queried Thuillier, to whom this theory seemed somewhat paradoxical.

"*Parbleu!*" replied Barbet, "when we have articles in all the papers. The announcements are only useful to arouse the public attention, to arrest it, so to speak: 'Hallo!' the people say, 'here's something that ought to be interesting.' *Taxes and the Sinking-Fund;* that's an attractive title! but the more alluring the title, the more suspicious people are; they've been taken in so many times! So they wait for the newspaper articles; whereas, for a book that's likely to have only a moderate sale there are always a hundred buyers or so all ready: but after them, good morning! we don't sell another one."

"If that's the way it is," said Thuillier, "you don't despair of the sale?"

"On the contrary, I think the prospects are very bright. When the *Débats,* the *Constitutionnel,* the *Siècle*, and the *Presse* have spoken, especially if you're *pummeled* by the *Débats,* which is a ministerial sheet, it won't take four days to get rid of the whole lot."

"You speak very confidently," rejoined Thuillier, "but how are we to get at all these bell-wethers of the press?"

"Oh! I'll look after that," said Barbet; "I'm on the best of terms with all the editors-in-chief; they say I'm a devil of a fellow and remind them of Ladvocat in his prime."

"In that case, my dear sir, you should have seen them already."

"Ah! I beg your pardon, Papa Thuillier; there's only one way of approaching journalists, and as you made a great outcry over the fifteen hundred the advertising cost you, I didn't dare broach the subject of another extraordinary credit."

"But what do you want the credit for?" inquired Thuillier anxiously.

"When you were elected a member of the General Council of the Seine," rejoined the bookseller, "where was your election fixed up?"

"*Parbleu!* in my own house," replied Thuillier.

"In your own house, very true, but at a dinner-party followed by a ball, and the ball crowned by a supper. Well, my dear sir, there are not two ways of doing business; Boileau says:

" 'Tout se fait en dînant dans le temps où nous sommes,
" 'Et c'est par les dîners *que l'on* gouverne les hommes!' " *

"So you think I should give the journalists a dinner?"

"Yes, but not at home, for newspaper men, you see, aren't at their ease when there are women

* In our day everything is arranged at the dinner-table, and men are governed by dinners.

about: they have to hold themselves back! And then a dinner's not the proper thing, but a breakfast. At night they have first performances to attend, articles to prepare, to say nothing of their little engagements; but in the morning they have nothing to think about; I've always given breakfasts myself."

"But such spreads cost a heap! A newspaper man's another name for a glutton!"

"Pshaw! twenty francs a head without wine. Suppose you have ten guests, you can do the thing very nicely for a hundred crowns or so. Why, just from an economical standpoint a breakfast is preferable; you couldn't get out of a dinner for anything less than a five-hundred franc note."

"How fast you go, young man!" said Thuillier.

"Damnation! everybody knows that a seat in the Chamber's an expensive luxury, and you're simply paving the way for your candidacy."

"But how shall I go to work to get these men? Must I go myself and invite them?"

"Not at all; you have sent them your pamphlet, so you can just name an hour at Philippe's or Véfour's; they'll understand mighty quick."

"Ten guests," said Thuillier, beginning to enter into the idea, "I shouldn't say there were so many first-class papers."

"True," replied the publisher, "but we must have the curs too, because they bay the loudest. Your breakfast will make a sensation; they would think you were trying to be exclusive, and you make an enemy of every man you leave out."

"You think it will be enough to send them written invitations?"

"Yes, I'll make a list; do you write the letters and send them to me; I'll see that they're sent, and will deliver several with my own hand."

"If I were sure that this outlay would produce the effect we desire!" said Thuillier hesitatingly.

"*'If I were sure'* is pretty good," said Barbet consequently; "why, my dear sir, it's money lent on mortgage; if you do this, I'll guarantee you a sale of fifteen hundred copies. At forty sous, allowing for cost of delivery, that makes three thousand francs. You see that your ordinary and extraordinary expenses are all covered, and more."

"Well," said Thuillier, preparing to go, "I'll talk it over with La Peyrade."

"As you please, my dear sir, but decide soon, for nothing moulds so quickly as a book: to write hot, to serve hot, to take away hot, that's the three-step exercise for author, publisher and public; outside of that we get nothing but *trash,* and it's best let alone."

When La Peyrade was consulted he did not, in reality, look upon it as a very efficacious remedy, but, in the bottom of his heart, he cherished the most bitter animosity against Thuillier, so that he was overjoyed to assist in levying the fresh tax that was suggested upon his conceited idiocy and his consequential inexperience.

As for Thuillier, the frenzy to pose as a publicist and to make a noise in the world possessed him to

such an extent, that, even while he groaned at the fresh bleeding to which his purse was subjected, he had already determined on the sacrifice before he took the advocate's advice. The very cautious and conditional approval given by La Peyrade was therefore more than sufficient to confirm him in his determination, and that same evening he returned to the establishment of Barbet *junior* and asked to see the famous list of invitations.

Barbet quickly prepared his little catalogue, and instead of the ten guests he had suggested, the names numbered fifteen, without counting himself and La Peyrade, whom Thuillier desired to have present to second him in this conclave, where he was quite sure that he should be more or less embarrassed.

When Thuillier had cast his eyes over the list which was handed to him, he said to the publisher:

"Look here, my dear man, you've written down the names of newspapers nobody ever heard of. What's this *Moralisateur,* and *Lanterne de Diogène,* and *Pélican,* and *Écho de la Bièvre?*"

"You make a great mistake," replied Barbet, "to turn up your nose at the *Écho de la Bièvre,* a paper that's published in the twelfth arrondissement where you expect to get your seat in the Chamber, and it's patronized by all the tanners in the Quartier Mouffetard!"

"Let that go then," said Thuillier, "but the *Pélican?*"

"The *Pélican?* a paper that's found in every

dentist's waiting-room, and dentists are the greatest *puffers* in the world; how many teeth a day, on an average, are pulled out in Paris, do you suppose?"

"Oh! drop that!" said Thuillier, who summarily struck out several names and reduced the number of guests to fourteen.

"If one should drop out," said Barbet, "there'll be thirteen of us."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Thuillier, the man of sense, "do you suppose I'm as superstitious as all that?"

The list being fixed at fourteen and closed, he wrote the invitations on the spot, on a corner of Barbet's desk, for the second day following, Barbet promising, in view of the urgency of the case, that no one would take offence at the shortness of the notice.

The breakfast was to take place at Véfour's, the restaurant *par excellence* for the middle class and provincials. Barbet arrived even before Thuillier, wearing a cravat tied in a huge knot which, in itself, was enough to make a sensation in the quizzical circle in which it was about to be displayed.

On his own responsibility the publisher changed several items in the menu, and notably, instead of having the champagne held back till the dessert bourgeois-fashion, he ordered that two bottles of champagne frappé should be placed on the table at the beginning of the feast, with a quantity of prawns, not thought of by the amphitryon.

Thuillier, who approved all these changes with a

very bad grace, was followed by La Peyrade; then there was a long hiatus in the procession of guests; the hour fixed for the breakfast was eleven o'clock, and at quarter to twelve no one had appeared.

Barbet, who never lost countenance, ventured the consoling remark that it was the same with invitations to breakfast at a restaurant as with funerals, where everyone knows that eleven o'clock means noon.

In fact, just before the latter hour, two gentlemen with goatees, exhaling a very strong odor of the tap-room, made their appearance. Thuillier thanked them effusively for the *honor* they were pleased to do him; then followed a further period of suspense, the agony whereof we need not describe.

At one o'clock the contingent of guests numbered five, Barbet and La Peyrade not included. It is needless to say that no journalist of standing or with any self-respect had accepted the absurd invitation. They had no choice but to take their places at the table; a few polite sentences addressed to Thuillier as to the *immensely* interesting character of his pamphlet were not enough to allay the bitterness of his discomfiture; and except for the joviality of the publisher, who seized the reins which Thuillier, as gloomy as Hippolyte on the road to Mycene, let fall, nothing could be imagined so deathly dull and cold as this festive assemblage.

However, when the oysters were removed, the champagne and chablis with which they were washed down were beginning to send the thermometer up

slightly, when a young man in a cap, rushing into the room where the banquet was in progress, dealt Thuillier a most terrible and unexpected blow.

"Master," said the new-comer to Barbet—he was one of the clerks in the bookshop, "we are cooked! the police have made a raid on you; there was a commissioner and two agents, and they seized monsieur's pamphlet, and here's the paper they gave me for you."

"Look at this, will you, Monsieur l'Avocat," said Barbet to La Peyrade, passing him the stamped paper. His customary assurance failed him a little at this blow.

"A summons to appear at once before the Assize Court," said La Peyrade, after reading a few lines of the bailiff's scrawl.

Thuillier turned pale as death.

"Didn't you comply with all the necessary formalities?" he asked the publisher in a choking voice.

"Oh! it's no formal matter," replied La Peyrade, "it's a seizure for indictable abuse of the press, inciting to hatred and contempt of the government. You must have a similar compliment awaiting you at home, Thuillier."

"Why, then, it is treason!" cried Thuillier, losing his head altogether.

"Damn it, my dear fellow, you know what you put in your pamphlet; for my part I didn't see anything in it to hang a man for."

"It's a misunderstanding," said Barbet, recovering his courage; "it will all be explained, and, as a

result, we'll have the best kind of material for an article, won't we, gentlemen?"

"Waiter, pen and ink!" cried one of the journalists thus addressed.

"Oh! you'll have time enough to write your article later; what has the bomb in common with this *filet sauté?*" said one of his confrères, paraphrasing the famous remark of Charles XII., King of Sweden, when a projectile interrupted him as he was dictating to one of his secretaries.

"Gentlemen," said Thuillier, rising, "I beg you will excuse me; if, as Monsieur Barbet thinks, there's a mistake in all this, it must be cleared up at once: so I am going to the king's attorney's office immediately.—La Peyrade," he added significantly, "you will not refuse to go with me, I take it.—And it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to come along, my dear publisher."

"Faith, no!" said Barbet junior; "when I breakfast, I breakfast; if the attorney's office has made a fool of itself, so much the worse for the attorney's office!"

"But suppose it's a genuine prosecution!" cried Thuillier, in the last stages of excitement.

"Why, I shall say, and it is perfectly true, that I didn't read a word of your pamphlet. There's just one thing that annoys me: these cursed *juries* don't like beards, so I must cut mine off if I have to appear before them."

"Come, my dear host, sit down again," said the editor-in-chief of the *Écho de la Bièvre,* "we'll back

you up: I have an article already written that will make a stir among the peat-sellers, and that honorable guild is a power in itself."

"No, gentlemen!" said Thuillier "no! a man like me cannot afford to remain quiet half an hour under the charge that has been brought against me. Go on without us: I hope to rejoin you soon.—Are you coming, La Peyrade?"

"He is delightful!" said Barbet, as Thuillier and his counsel took their departure; "to leave a breakfast after the oysters, just to go and talk with a figure-head of a deputy-attorney! Come, gentlemen, close ranks," he added with animation.

"Look!" said one of the famished journalists, happening to cast his eye over the garden of the Palais-Royal, upon which the breakfast room of the restaurant looked; "there's Barbanchu going by! suppose I call him up?"

"Yes, by all means! *A paterfamilias requires a substitute*," said Barbet junior, paraphrasing an advertisement everybody has read at the street corners.

"Barbanchu! Barbanchu!" cried the self-styled journalist.

Barbanchu, with a pointed cap on his head, was a long while discovering the *cloud* from which a voice was calling him.

"Up here!" cried the voice, which seemed to him a voice from heaven, when he saw that he was hailed by a man with a glass of champagne in his hand.

"Come up, my dear boy, come up!" they shouted to him in chorus, when he seemed to be hesitating; "there's a good feed!"

When he left the attorney's office, Thuillier's last hope had fled. The prosecution was a genuine affair, and from the harsh reception he had met with, he was justified in believing that he would be treated without any indulgence.

Thereupon, as always happens between confederates, after the ill-success of the undertaking in which they have been jointly concerned, La Peyrade was assailed with many harsh words: "He had paid no attention to what he was writing; he had given full swing to his stupid Saint-Simonian ideas; he snapped his fingers at the consequences! he wasn't the one who would have to pay the fine and go to prison!" When La Peyrade replied that the affair did not seem serious to him, and that he would undertake to secure a verdict of not guilty, Thuillier retorted:

"*Parbleu!* it's a very simple matter isn't it? Monsieur sees nothing in it but a case to make a hit in; but I won't trust my honor and my fortune in the hands of such a rattle-headed fellow as you. I'll have a great advocate if the case comes to trial. I've had enough of your collaboration!"

La Peyrade felt his temper rising under these unjust reproaches. However, he felt that he was disarmed, and as he did not choose to bring about a rupture, he ended by leaving Thuillier, saying that he would forgive a man who was so excited by fear,

and that he would call during the afternoon and see if he were not a little calmer; at the same time they would come to an understanding as to what course they should attempt to pursue.

About four o'clock, therefore, the Provençal called at the house on Boulevard de la Madeleine. Thuillier's irritation had vanished and was succeeded by the most craven fear. If he had been expecting to be sent for to be led to the scaffold in half an hour, he could not have been more completely crushed and unmanned. Madame Thuillier, when the advocate appeared, was engaged in administering a decoction of herbs to him. The poor woman had emerged from her usual apathetic state, and showed herself a veritable Epponina beside this nineteenth-century Sabinus.

As to Brigitte, who soon made her appearance bringing a foot-bath with her own hands, she treated the advocate without mercy or measure; her bitter, acrimonious reproaches, out of all proportion to his sin, if indeed he had been guilty of any sin, would have driven the most placid of men to forget himself.

La Peyrade felt that he was ruined in the Thuillier household, where one and all seemed to gloat over the opportunity to break faith with him and to exhibit the most revolting ingratitude with the utmost freedom. When an ironical allusion was made to his success in obtaining decorations for his friends, he rose and took his leave, deaf to all attempts to detain him.

*

After walking for a while through the streets, the Provençal, in the midst of his wrath, thought of Madame de Godollo,—in fact, since their first interview his mind had often reverted to the lovely foreigner.

Not on a single occasion only had she cut short her visit when she happened to be at the Thuilliers, on his arrival there; the performance was repeated whenever they met; and without knowing just what it meant, La Peyrade had convinced himself that, at all events, this affectation of flight meant something more than indifference. After the first visit, to call again at once upon the fair Hungarian would not have been a clever move; but at the present hour, all the time necessary to justify the conclusion that a man had entirely retained his self-control had elapsed. He retraced his steps therefore, and, without asking the concierge if the countess was at home, went upstairs as if returning to the Thuilliers' and rang the bell of the apartment on the entresol.

As on the former occasion he was requested by the maid-servant to wait until she had spoken to her mistress, but the room he was ushered into was not the dining-room, but another small salon arranged as a library.

He was made to wait a long while and he did not know what to think. He comforted himself, however, with the thought that, if he was to be denied

an audience, the deliberation would not have lasted so long.

At last the maid returned, but even then it was not to introduce him.

"Madame la Comtesse," he was told, "is very busy, and she begs monsieur to find something to read while he is waiting, because she may be detained longer than she would like."

As there was nothing disheartening either in the substance or the form of the excuse, the advocate set about taking the prescription suggested to avert ennui. Without having to open any of the book-cases in carved violet-wood, which contained a collection of the most richly bound volumes he had ever seen, he found upon a long table with twisted legs and covered with a green cloth, a miscellaneous assortment of books quite sufficient for the consumption of a man whose thoughts were more than likely to be elsewhere.

But as he opened one book after another of those left at his disposal, it seemed to him as if she had taken pleasure in inflicting the tortures of Tantalus upon him; there was an English work, one in German and one in Russian, and he even found one printed in Turkish characters. Had she amused herself by arranging a sort of polyglot mystification for him?

His attention was at last attracted by a volume whose binding, unlike all those which were sealed books to him, was much less sumptuous than suggestive. It lay by itself on a corner of the table, so

opened that with its front edges resting on the green cloth, it stood like a tent. La Peyrade took it up, taking care to keep the place which somebody had evidently intended to mark.

It was a volume of the illustrated edition of Monsieur Scribe's works; the picture at which it was opened represented the principal scene of a vaudeville played at the Gymnase, entitled *A Woman's Hate.* Doubtless there are few of our lady readers who are not familiar with the plot of this piece, suggested, it is said, to the illustrious author of so many little masterpieces by a phrase which he caught one day from his concierge's lips: "There be folks," said the woman, "who pretend to spit in the plate, so's to sicken other folks and get it all for *theirselves.*"

The principal character in *A Woman's Hate* is a young widow who pursues with the most frantic vindictiveness a poor young man who had done her no injury. Everybody fancies that it is an undying hatred. By her wicked manœuvres she almost ruins his reputation and makes him miss a wealthy marriage; but, as it turns out, it is for the purpose of giving him more than she has taken from him, for in the end she gives herself to him, and takes for her husband the man who was supposed to be her victim.

If this volume had been put by itself by chance, and had also been left open by chance at the precise place at which La Peyrade found it open, we must agree, in view of what had taken place between him

and the countess, that chance often seems to be very adroit and very clever.

As he reflected upon the deep meaning that might be attached to this more or less fortuitous occurrence, La Peyrade set about reading a scene or two to see if there was so close an analogy to his situation in the details of the play as in its general drift. While he was reading with interest, not undisturbed by thoughts that diverted his mind, he heard doors opening and shutting, and, recognizing the silvery and somewhat jaunty tones of the fair Hungarian, knew that she was showing somebody out.

"So I may promise Madame l'Ambassadrice," the noble dame's interlocutor—for it was a man—was saying, "that you will grace her ball with your presence this evening?"

"Yes, commander, if my sick headache, which seems somewhat easier at this moment, is obliging enough to leave me altogether."

"Au revoir, then, adorable creature," said the man's voice.

With that the door closed and silence reigned as before.

The title of commmander consoled La Peyrade somewhat, for it was not over common among young dandies. He was, however, very curious to know who the personage was with whom she had been closeted so long. As he heard no one coming, the advocate walked to the window looking on the street and cautiously drew aside the curtain, ready to let it fall at the slightest sound and execute a

right-about-face movement in time to avoid being caught in the act of committing the crime of curiosity. A handsome coupé standing a few steps from the house, which he had not noticed when he entered, drove up to the door, a footman in a showy but tasteful livery hastened to let down the step, and a little old man, alert and spruce, although he seemed to be one of those infrequent relics of the past who have not yet abandoned the use of powder, stepped quickly into the carriage and was at once driven rapidly away. La Peyrade had had time to notice a long string of decorations. This brilliant rainbow left little room for doubt that the powdered Titus was a personage connected with the diplomatic service.

La Peyrade had just taken up his book once more, for it seemed to him that it would be as well, in any event, for him to be seen reading it, when the ringing of a bell, followed almost immediately by the maid's appearance, indicated that his long wait was at last at an end.

Requested by the maid to follow her, the advocate carefully laid the book down, not in the same condition in which he found it, and in another moment was in the countess's presence.

There was a look of suffering on the Hungarian's lovely face, which, however, lost nothing of its charm thereby. By her side, on the couch where she was sitting, lay an unfolded manuscript—written upon gilt-edged paper in the free, flowing hand which characterizes the official productions of a

cabinet minister or the chancellor's office. In her hand she held a crystal flask with stopper of chased gold, and frequently inhaled its contents, for a strong smell of English salts dominated the other perfumes that were diffused through the room.

"You are ill, madame?" La Peyrade inquired with concern.

"Oh! it's nothing," said the countess, "a sick headache, to which I am very subject. But what's happened to you, monsieur? I was beginning to lose all hope of seeing you again. Have you come to tell me some great news? Is the date of your marriage with Mademoiselle Colleville sufficiently near at hand to become the subject of a formal communication?"

This beginning was somewhat disconcerting to La Peyrade.

"Why, madame," he retorted, almost roughly, "you are sufficiently well informed, I should say, as to what takes place in the Thuillier household to know that nothing of the sort you mention is near at hand, nor indeed, I may say to-day, is it probable."

"No, I give you my word, I know nothing about it, I have definitely forbidden myself to seem to take any further interest in an affair in which I undertook to interfere, very foolishly, however you look at it; Mademoiselle Brigitte and I talk about everything under heaven except Céleste's marriage."

"And of course it's the wish to leave me entirely free in that direction which has put you to flight

whenever I have had the honor of meeting you at our friends' house?"

"Why yes," said the countess, "that must have been my reason for leaving the field to you; otherwise, why should I have been so ill-bred?"

"Oh! madame, there are so many other reasons which may make a woman avoid the presence of a man! For example, suppose he has displeased her; suppose the advice she has with rare amiability tendered him has not apparently been received with such respectful warmth as it deserved."

"Oh! my dear monsieur," said the countess, "I am not so eager to make converts that I should think of bearing malice against anybody for not following my advice with docility; I am as much inclined as other people to see things awry."

"On the contrary, madame, in the matter of my marriage your perception was most keen."

"How's this?" said the countess eagerly; "has the seizure of the pamphlet, coming after the Cross episode, brought about a rupture?"

"No," said La Peyrade, "my influence in the Thuillier family rests upon more solid foundations, and in comparison with the great services I have rendered them, these two misadventures, luckily very easy to repair,—"

"Do you think so?" the countess interposed, with an incredulous air.

"It's very evident," said La Peyrade, "that when Madame la Comtesse du Bruel really takes it into her head to get that red ribbon, notwithstanding the

obstacles that have hitherto retarded her kindness in the matter, she will be in a fair way to secure that result, which, after all, isn't beyond human strength."

The countess received this assurance with a smile, and shook her head.

"But, madame, only a few days ago Madame la Comtesse du Bruel told Madame Colleville that this unforeseen resistance had wounded her self-esteem, and that she was going to call upon the minister herself."

"But you forget that the police have made a raid since then, and it isn't the custom to wait until a man is sitting in the dock at the Assizes to decorate him. You have not noticed that this seizure indicates that somebody has a grudge against Monsieur Thuillier, and perhaps against yourself,—for you are the real culprit—which you don't take into account. The attorney's office doesn't seem to have acted of its own motion on this occasion."

La Peyrade glanced at the countess.

"I confess," he said, after this rapid survey of her features, "that I have still to find in the proscribed work any pretext for the measures taken against it."

"It is my opinion also," said the Hungarian, "that the king's law officers must have had a very vivid imagination to persuade themselves that they had to do with a seditious work; but that only points the more clearly to the underground influence which defeats all your kindly efforts in favor of our excellent Monsieur Thuillier."

"Do you know who these secret enemies of ours are, madame?" inquired La Peyrade.

"Perhaps," said the countess with another smile.

"Suppose, madame," said La Peyrade earnestly, "that I should venture to express a suspicion?"

"Go on," replied Madame de Godollo; "I would not take it ill of you if you should guess."

"Well then, madame, Thuillier's enemies and mine *are* a woman."

"Suppose that to be the fact," said the countess. "Do you know how many lines in a man's handwriting Richelieu asked to see, in order to have him hanged?"

"Four," replied La Peyrade.

"Then you can understand that a pamphlet of more than two hundred pages might furnish a woman ever so little inclined to—intrigue, with material for persecution."

"I understand it all, madame!" cried La Peyrade excitedly; "I think that that woman is one in a thousand, that she's as crafty and as intelligent as Richelieu; that she is an adorable witch, who governs the movements of police and gendarmes, and, more than that, that she glues to the ministers' hands the Crosses that are all ready to fall from them."

"Very well," said the countess, "where's the use of fighting with her?"

"Ah! I fight no more," said La Peyrade, measuring the extent of her kindly feeling for him by the trouble she had taken on his account. "*Mon Dieu!*

madame," he added with feigned contrition, "do you really *hate* me, then?"

"Not quite so much as you might think," replied the countess; "but, after all, suppose I did hate you?"

"Ah! madame," said La Peyrade with enthusiasm, "I should be the happiest of unfortunate creatures, for your hatred would seem to me a thousand times sweeter and more precious than your indifference. But you do not hate me: why should you entertain for me that blessed feminine sentiment which Scribe has depicted with such wit and delicacy in one of the gems he wrote for the Gymnase?"

Madame de Godollo did not answer the question, but with lowered eyes and a pronounced quickening of the breath which caused her voice to tremble a little, she rejoined:

"Can such a stoic as you find time to think about a woman's hate?"

"Oh! yes, madame," replied La Peyrade, "I should think a great deal about it, not to rebel against it, but, on the contrary, to bless the rigor which condescended to select me for its object. My fair foe once known and avowed, I should not despair of moving her, for I should never again be found following any path that was not hers, never marching under a flag she had not declared to be her own; I should wait to be inspired by her, before thinking; to know her will, before having any will of my own; to hear her lightest word before acting;

I should be in everything her assistant,—better still, her slave; and, though she should repulse me with her tiny foot, punish me with her white hand, I would endure it all with bliss. As the reward of such absolute obedience and submission to her will I would ask but one favor,—to be allowed to kiss the imprint of the foot that repulsed me, and to cover with my tears the hand raised threateningly over my head."

In the course of this long outburst of an overwrought, distracted heart, which the delirium of prospective triumph had torn from the Provençal's impressionable nature, he had glided from his seat and finally landed a few steps away from the countess, with one knee on the floor in the conventional attitude of the stage, which, however, is much more fashionable in real life than is commonly supposed.

"Rise, monsieur," said the countess, "and be good enough to answer my questions."

With a questioning glance, and her lovely eyebrows drawn together in a frown, she continued:

"Have you carefully weighed the meaning of the words that have just fallen from your lips? have you measured their depth and realized all that they bind you to? Tell me with your hand upon your heart and your conscience, are you the man to keep to all that those words promise, and are you not one of those cringing, those perfidious wretches, who go through the form of embracing our knees for no other purpose than to destroy the equilibrium of our reason and our will with greater ease?"

"I!" cried La Peyrade; "I shall never again struggle against the fascination which began with me at our first interview! Ah! madame, the fact that I did resist it and fight against it should make you the more ready to believe in its sincerity and its tardy assumption of dominion over me. What I said, I think; what I think aloud to-day, I have thought beneath my breath ever since the moment that I first had the honor to be received by you, and the long days that I have passed in struggling against my inclination have made of it a fixed determination which has reckoned with itself, and which not even your cruelty can discourage."

"Cruelty, possibly not," said the countess, "but we must consider how it would be with kindness; be good enough to examine yourself with care; we foreigners have no comprehension of the fickleness with which the French often treat the most solemn engagements. With us, a yes is a sacred obligation; our word is a bond. We wish for nothing and do nothing by halves. In my family crest, there is a device which has a profound significance in this connection: *All or nothing*. That is much to say, and yet it is hardly enough."

"Oh! that is just the way that I understand it," rejoined the advocate, "and my first act when I go from here, will be to break with the despicable past which for an instant I seemed to weigh in the balance with the intoxicating future to which you did not forbid me to aspire."

"No," said the countess, "go about it more

calmly and with more moderation; I'm not fond of such hotheaded performances, and you'd make but little headway with me by breaking windows. These Thuilliers aren't bad people, at bottom; they have humiliated you, without intending to; they belong to a class which is not yours! Is it their fault? Untie, but do not break, and above all things reflect. Your conversion to my religion is of such very recent date! What man is sure of what his heart will tell him to-morrow?"

"I, madame," said La Peyrade, "I am that man. We men of the South do not love in the French way either."

"Why," retorted the Hungarian with a charming smile, "I thought we were talking about hate."

"Ah! madame," cried the advocate, "even when explained and understood that word has an ill sound; tell me rather, not that you love me, but that the words you deigned to address to me at our first meeting are an accurate reflection of your thought."

"My friend," replied the countess, emphasizing the word, "one of your moralists has said: 'There are those who, when they say: *That is so*, or: *That is not so*, have no need to swear to it, for their characters swear for them.' Do me the honor to believe that I am one of those people."

And she offered the advocate her hand with a modest, graceful gesture.

The advocate, beside himself, pounced upon her hand and smothered it with kisses.

"That will do, child!" she said, gently releasing

the prisoner; "adieu, for a short time! I believe my sick headache has gone."

La Peyrade picked up his hat, and started to rush out of the room; but he stopped at the door, turned about and gazed at the lovely Hungarian with eyes overflowing with passion.

The countess gave him a charming farewell nod, and as he seemed inclined to retrace his steps, she motioned to him with her finger to be more discreet and to stay where he was.

La Peyrade thereupon made his exit. On the stairs he paused to exhale, if we may so express it, the ecstasy with which his heart was overflowing; the countess's words and the ingenious preparations she had made to put him upon the track of her sentiments appeared to him as so many guarantees of her sincerity, and he went his way with confidence.

Under the spell of the intense excitement which thrice-happy people betray, not only in their gestures and their expression and their gait, but sometimes in acts which have not, strictly speaking, the sanction of common sense,—after delaying a moment on the staircase, he ascended a few steps to a point whence he could see the Thuilliers' apartment.

"At last," he cried, "glory and fortune and happiness are coming to me, and, more than that, I shall be able to enjoy the sweets of vengeance!—After Dutocq and Cérizet, I will crush you, vile bourgeois brood!" he added.

And he shook his fist at the harmless double door.

Then he set off at a run, and the trite saying was

at that moment verified in him: the earth was not big enough to hold him.

The next day, unable to contain longer the tempest that raged within him, La Peyrade called upon the Thuilliers. He went there with a feeling of bitter hostility: conceive his utter stupefaction! Before he had time to put himself on guard against such a demonstration of amity and forgiveness, Thuillier rushed into his arms.

"My friend," cried the ex-deputy-chief clerk as he released him from his embrace, "my political fortune is made, all the newspapers without exception refer to the seizure of my pamphlet, and you ought to see how the opposition sheets go for the government!"

"That's easily explained," said the advocate, uninspired by his enthusiasm, "you have become a good subject for them; but that doesn't put any better face on your affair, and the attorney's office will be all the keener to obtain a conviction, as they say they will."

"Very well," said Thuillier, proudly tossing his head, "then I'll go to prison, like Béranger and Lamennais and Armand Carrel."

"My dear fellow, persecution is a charming thing, at a distance, but when you hear the heavy locks turned on you, be sure that the trade will seem much less attractive."

"In the first place," urged Thuillier, "a political convict is never refused permission to do his time in a hospital, and I'm not convicted yet, anyway;

you thought yesterday yourself that we might hope for an acquittal."

"True, but since then I have learned certain things that make that result appear very doubtful; the same hand that prevented your getting the Cross was probably at the bottom of the seizure of your pamphlet; you will be destroyed with malice aforethought."

"As you know who this dangerous enemy is," said Thuillier, "you won't refuse to tell me, I suppose?"

"I don't know who he is," replied La Peyrade, "but I suspect; that's what trying to play a sharp game comes to."

"What's that! play a sharp game?" said Thuillier, with the interest of a man who knows that he has nothing of that sort to reproach himself with.

"Certainly," the advocate replied. "You have made Céleste a sort of decoy to lure starlings into your salon; everybody isn't as magnanimous as Monsieur Godeschal, who showed such a generous spirit in the affair of this house, after you'd given him the cold shoulder."

"Explain yourself better," said Thuillier, "I don't catch your meaning at all."

"Nothing can be easier to understand. Leaving me out, how many aspirants are there to Céleste's hand? Godeschal, young Minard, young Phellion, Olivier Vinet, the deputy-attorney,—all of them men whom you play with as you do with me."

"Olivier Vinet, the deputy-attorney!" cried

Thuillier, as if a ray of light had broken in upon his mind; "that's where the trouble must have come from, I verily believe. His father has a very long arm, they say. But can it be said that we have played with him, to adopt your highly unbecoming expression? He passed one evening at our house and made no request of us any more than young Minard or young Phellion ever did. Godeschal is the only one who ever ventured to say anything directly, and far from being kept in suspense he was unhesitatingly refused."

"That's true," retorted La Peyrade, still trying to stir up a quarrel: "it's only those who say what they have to say in clear, precise language that you pride yourself on trifling with!"

"Come, come!" said Thuillier, "what are you after with your insinuations? Didn't you fix everything the other day with Brigitte? You select a good time to come and talk to me about your love affairs when the sword of justice is raised above my head!"

"Very good," said La Peyrade satirically; "now you're going to make the most of your interesting position as a man accused of a political offence. I knew very well that that was the way it would be, and that, when your pamphlet was once finished, the pleas in bar would begin again."

"*Parbleu!*" retorted Thuillier, "it's rather amusing to pretend that your pamphlet removed all the obstacles, when, on the contrary, it is the cause of most annoying complications."

"Annoying, how so? your political fortune is made!"

"Upon my word, my dear fellow," said Thuillier sentimentally, "I would never have thought that you'd choose the hour of adversity to come and hold a pistol at our heads, and vent your sulkiness and malice on me!"

"Well, well!" sneered La Peyrade, "now this is your hour of adversity, and only a moment ago you threw yourself into my arms like a man to whom some extraordinary good fortune had come. But you must make up your mind whether you'll be a man to be pitied or a glorious conqueror."

"It's no use for you to try to be funny," retorted Thuillier, "you can't put me in the wrong; I am logical if I'm not brilliant. It's very natural that I should take some comfort in having public opinion pronounced in my favor, and in reading in its organs most honorable expressions of its entire sympathy; but, even so, do you suppose I wouldn't have preferred to have things take their course, and when I find that people as influential as the Vinets are taking a mean revenge on me, can I measure the extent of the danger to which I am exposed?"

"In that case," said La Peyrade with pitiless persistence, "you're a regular weeping Jack!"

"Yes," replied Thuillier solemnly, "weeping over a friendship which I thought was a true and lasting one, but which has only sarcasm for me when I expected friendly service."

"What service?" demanded La Peyrade. "Didn't

you tell me yesterday that you'd had enough of my collaboration in every direction? I offered to defend you; you answered that you should retain some great lawyer."

"No doubt; under the first impression of surprise caused by such an unforeseen blow I may have said such a foolish thing; but, on reflection, who is better qualified than you to explain the meaning of what came from your own pen? I was beside myself yesterday, and to-day, you with your wounded self-esteem, that can't make any allowance for a thing done on the spur of the moment,—you, I say, are very bitter and very cruel."

"So you formally request me to defend you before the jury, do you?"

"Why, yes, my dear fellow; I see no other hands in which I can place my case. I might pay some high and mighty gentleman at the Palais an absurd fee, and he not defend me as skilfully as you would."

"Well, I refuse; our respective rôles, you see, are exactly changed; yesterday I thought, as you do to-day, that I was the man for the case; to-day I think that you really ought to retain somebody at the top of the profession, because, with Vinet's antagonism, the affair has assumed proportions which impose a truly alarming responsibility upon the man who undertakes to defend you."

"I understand," sneered Thuillier; "Monsieur has always had his eye on the magistracy, and he doesn't want to have any trouble with a man who

has been mentioned as Keeper of the Seals. That's very prudent of you, but I don't know how far it will advance your marriage."

"That is to say," retorted La Peyrade, catching the ball on the bound, "that to extricate you from the claws of the jury is the thirteenth task of Hercules which I must perform in order to deserve Mademoiselle Colleville's hand. I suspected that your demands would multiply in proportion to the proofs of my devotion, but that is just what's tiring me out, and to cut short this exploitation of one man by another, I came here this morning to tell you that I give you back your word: so you are at liberty to dispose of Céleste's hand; so far as I am concerned, I make no claim to it."

The shock of this downright declaration left Thuillier speechless,—fortunately as it happened, as Brigitte entered at that moment. The housekeeper's mood was also considerably milder than on the preceding day and her greeting was charmingly familiar and friendly.

"Ah! here you are," she said to La Peyrade, "you rascal of an advocate!"

"Mademoiselle, I salute you," replied the advocate gravely.

"Well," continued the old maid without paying any attention to La Peyrade's ceremonious air, "the government's got itself into a pretty fix by seizing your pamphlet! You ought to see how the newspapers worry 'em this morning!—Look here," she added, handing Thuillier a small sheet, printed

on *papier à sucre* in large but almost illegible characters, "here's one you haven't read; the concierge just brought it up; it's a paper published in our old quarter, the *Écho de la Bièvre*. I don't know if you agree with me, gentlemen, but it seems to me that the article couldn't have been better written. It's strange though, how little attention these newspaper men pay to things: they write your name without the *h*. Seems to me you might claim damages for it."

Thuillier took the paper and read the article inspired by the stomachic gratitude of the editor-in-chief of the tanners' journal. Brigitte had never paid any attention to newspapers except to see if they were large enough to do up packages in, but, having been suddenly converted to the worship of the press by the ardor of her sisterly love, she stationed herself behind Thuillier, and looked over his shoulder, reading with him the salient passages of the sheet that had seemed so eloquent to her, and emphasizing them with her finger.

"Yes," said Thuillier folding the paper, "it is zealous and very flattering to me—But here's something very different! Monsieur here insists upon it that he won't defend me, and says that he gives up his claim to Céleste's hand."

"That is to say," rejoined Brigitte, "he gives it up unless we'll marry him off in double-quick time after the trial. For my part, I think his conditions are very reasonable, poor boy. When he has done that for us, there sha'n't be any more postponing,

and whether Mademoiselle Céleste falls in with the idea or not, she must accept, for there's a limit to everything, you know."

"You hear, my dear fellow," said La Peyrade, seizing upon Brigitte's suggestion, "the marriage shall take place when I have tried your case. Your sister is frankness itself and doesn't employ the least diplomacy."

"Diplomacy!" repeated Brigitte. "Oh! I propose to take a hand in the matter now. I say things as they come into my mind; the workman has done his work, and he must be paid for his trouble."

"Hold your tongue!" cried Thuillier, stamping on the floor; "you don't say a word that doesn't turn the dagger in the wound."

"What's that! the dagger in the wound?" Brigitte repeated; "hoity-toity! are you at loggerheads?"

"I told you," said Thuillier, "that La Peyrade had given us back our promise, and his reason is that we demand something else of him before giving him Céleste's hand; he thinks he's done enough for us already."

"He has done a good deal for us, no doubt," replied Brigitte, "but it don't strike me that we've been ungrateful to him. Besides, he's made all the trouble, and it's a pretty good one for him to leave us in the lurch now."

"Your reasoning, my dear young lady," said La Peyrade, "might seem unanswerable, if there were no other lawyer than myself in Paris; but as the

streets are paved with them, and as Thuillier himself spoke yesterday of retaining a man of standing in the profession, I haven't the slightest scruple about refusing to undertake his defence. Now, as to the marriage in question, in order that it may not be again made the pretext for some brutal, bold-faced bargain, I hereby resign my pretensions in the most formal way, and nothing need prevent Mademoiselle Colleville from accepting all the advantages that go with Monsieur Phellion."

"As you please, my dear sir," retorted Brigitte; "if that's your last word we sha'n't be hard put to it to find a husband for Céleste,—young Phellion or somebody else; but allow me to tell you that the reason you give isn't the true one; for, after all's said and done, we can't go any faster than the violins; even if we decided on the marriage to-day, the banns would have to be published; you know enough to understand that the mayor can't marry you until you've gone through with all the formalities, and between now and then Thuillier will have been tried."

"Yes," retorted La Peyrade, "and if I lose the case I shall be the one who sends Thuillier to prison, just as I was the one yesterday who was responsible for the seizure."

"Goodness, I should say that if you hadn't written anything the police wouldn't have found anything to snap at."

"My dear girl," interposed Thuillier, seeing La Peyrade shrug his shoulders, "your reasoning is

very bad, for the reason that the pamphlet isn't indictable in any sense of the word. It isn't La Peyrade's fault that influential men have started out to persecute me. You remember that little deputy king's-attorney, Monsieur Olivier Vinet, Cardot brought to one of our receptions; it seems he and his father are in a rage because we wouldn't take him for Céleste, and they have sworn to ruin me."

"Well, why did we refuse him," said Brigitte, "if it wasn't for monsieur's fine eyes? A deputy-attorney at Paris, you know, wasn't a bad sort of a match."

"No doubt," said La Peyrade carelessly; "but he didn't bring a dowry of a round million in his pocket."

"Ah!" cried Brigitte, warming to the subject, "if you're going to talk about the house you helped us buy I'll just tell you that, if you'd had the money yourself to put out to cheat the notary out of it, you'd never have come to us. You mustn't think, you see, that you've pulled the wool over my eyes altogether; you were talking about bargains just now, but this was your own proposition: 'Give me Céleste, and I'll give you the house;' that's what you gave us to understand in so many words; and even then we had to make sacrifices we didn't reckon on."

"Come, Brigitte," said Thuillier, "you're talking nonsense!"

"Nonsense! nonsense!" repeated Brigitte. "Did

we or didn't we have to put out more than the sum agreed on?"

"My dear Thuillier," said La Peyrade, "I agree with you that the question is thrashed out and that it will only embitter matters to keep saying the same things over and over again. My mind was made up before I came; all that I have heard has only confirmed me in that decision; I shall not be your *son-in-law*, but we'll be good friends just the same."

And he rose to take his leave.

"One moment, Monsieur l'Avocat," thereupon said Brigitte, stepping across his path; "there's one subject that I don't consider thrashed out and, now that we are not to have a common purse any more, I shouldn't mind if you would be *kind* enough to tell me what became of a matter of ten thousand francs Thuillier turned over to you for those curs in the department, who were to get us the Cross we haven't yet seen?"

"Brigitte," exclaimed Thuillier in agony, "you have a hellish tongue: you weren't to know anything about that little detail, which I told you when I was in a bad humor, and you promised not to open your mouth about it to anybody *who*soever."

"True; but we're dissolving partnership now," rejoined the implacable Brigitte, "and when we dissolve, we settle up. Ten thousand francs! I thought that was pretty high for a real cross; but for a cross that don't materialize, monsieur will agree that it's out of all reason."

"Look here, La Peyrade, my friend," said Thuillier, walking up to the advocate, who was livid with rage, "don't listen to Brigitte; her affection for me turns her head; I know well enough what the departments are, and I shouldn't be surprised if you had put in a little of your own money too."

"Monsieur," replied La Peyrade, "unfortunately I am not in a position to send you, as soon as I return home, the sum for which I have been called to account with such insulting brutality. But perhaps you will give me a little time, and if you care to accept a note to help you to be patient, I am ready to give it to you."

"To the devil with your note!" said Thuillier; "you owe me nothing, and in reality we are still in debt to you, for Cardot told me that you ought to have at least ten thousand francs for the magnificent bargain you put in our way."

"Cardot! Cardot!" said Brigitte, "he's very generous with other people's money! We gave him Céleste, that was much better than ten thousand francs."

La Peyrade was too accomplished an actor not to find in the humiliation he was forced to undergo an opportunity for an effective dénoûment. With tears in his voice, which were not long in rising to his eyes, he said:

"Mademoiselle, when I first had the honor of being received at your house, I was a poor man, and you saw that for a long while I was distressed and ill at ease, because I knew that poverty exposes one

to every sort of indignity. From the day when I was able to bring you the fortune which I did not seek for myself, I felt more assurance, and your very kindness encouraged me to shake off my timidity and self-abasement. To-day, when I in my loyalty to you take a step which takes a great load off your mind, for, if you would deal frankly with me, you would acknowledge that you have dreamed of another husband for Céleste, we might abandon an idea which my sense of delicacy forbids me to pursue, and nevertheless remain friends. All that was necessary for that was for us not to overstep the limits of that courtesy of which you have a model before you every day, for, although Madame de Godollo does not look favorably upon me, I am sure that her good breeding would not allow her to approve of your shameful performance. But, thank heaven, I have some religious feeling in my heart; the Gospel is not a dead letter in my eyes, and understand, mademoiselle, *I forgive you:* not to Thuillier, who would not accept them, but to you, as my only revenge, I will shortly repay the ten thousand francs, which I have, in your opinion, used for my own purposes. When you have them in your hands, if you should have laid aside your unjust suspicions, and should feel any scruple about using the money, you can turn it over to the bureau of charity—"

"The bureau of charity!" cried Brigitte, interrupting him, "thanks! to be distributed to a parcel of lazy louts and pious frauds who go junketing on

it after 'eating the Good Lord'—taking the Sacrament—. I have been poor too, my boy, and for a long time I made bags to put other people's money in before I put in any of my own; I have some now and I'll keep it; so, when you please I'm all ready to receive it; so much the worse for you, if you don't know how to do the business you undertake, and shoot off all your powder at sparrows."

Seeing that he had missed his mark and had made no impression on Brigitte's granite surface, La Peyrade glanced disdainfully at her, and stalked majestically forth.

He noticed that Thuillier made a motion to detain him, but an imperious gesture from Brigitte, still as always queen and mistress, nailed her brother to his place.

*

Upon his return home the advocate completed his emancipation by writing to Madame Colleville that, as his projected marriage to Céleste was broken off, he felt compelled, by a sense of propriety as well as by his instinctive delicacy, to cease his visits to her.

The next day Colleville, on his way to his office, went up to La Peyrade's quarters and asked him what all that *stuff* was that he had written to Flavie, whom it had driven to despair, he said.

The advocate assumed his most solemn expression as he repeated to the husband the by no means amorous epistle he had indited to the wife.

"And that's what you call being a friend, is it?" said Colleville, who, as the reader will remember, had for a long time been on familiar terms with the Provençal. "You don't choose to marry: is that a reason for falling out with the girl's parents? It looks like holding us responsible for the words you may have had with the Thuilliers. Is that our affair? Hasn't my wife always treated you well?"

"I have no reason to do aught but congratulate myself upon Madame Colleville's kindness to me," replied La Peyrade.

"And is that why you want to kill her with grief? She's had her handkerchief in her hand ever since she had your letter: I tell you she'll get sick over it."

"Listen to me, my dear Colleville," said La Peyrade; "I owe you the truth and you are entitled to hear it: apart from the fact that I cannot now meet Mademoiselle Céleste—"

"Well, then you sha'n't meet her," Colleville interrupted; "when you come the little one shall go to her room; besides it won't be long before she's married."

"Very good; but I ought to say in addition that my frequent visits at your house have been made a subject of slander, and malicious reports have been circulated. It is my wish no less than my duty to put an end to them."

"What!" cried the husband, "a man of your common sense take any notice of such trash! You undertake to prevent people's tongues from wagging? Why they've been talking about my wife twenty-five years because she's built on a little better model than Brigitte and Madame Thuillier. In that case I'm more of a Spartan than you, for all their chatter has never caused me fifteen minutes' unhappiness at home."

"Well," said La Peyrade, "although I honor you for it, because it bespeaks a noble heart, I believe that this contempt for public opinion is imprudent."

"Nonsense!" said Colleville; "I trample on public opinion, the vile hussy! Minard's the one who starts the reports, because his great fat cook of a wife never attracted an honest man's notice. He would do much better, would Monsieur le Maire, to

keep his eye on the conduct of his son, who's ruining himself with a former actress at Bobino's."

"You must try to make Flavie listen to reason, my dear fellow," said La Peyrade.

"Good!" said Colleville, energetically shaking the advocate's hand; "you call her Flavie as you used to do, and I've found my friend again."

"Certainly," rejoined La Peyrade, in a less effusive tone, "friends are always friends."

"Yes, friends are friends," echoed Colleville; "friendship! a gift from the gods, which consoles us for all the crooked things in life! So it's understood that you will come and see my wife, and restore tranquillity and peace in my unhappy household."

La Peyrade promised in a vague way, and when he was rid of his importunate friend he asked himself whether this peculiar marital temperament, which is more common than people imagine, was genuine or a bit of comedy.

As the advocate was preparing to go and deposit at the countess's feet the homage of the freedom he had recovered with so little ceremony, he received a perfumed note which made his heart beat fast; he recognized on the seal the famous device: *All or Nothing*, which had been given him as the guiding precept of his new relations.

"Dear Monsieur," said Madame de Godollo, "I have learned your decision—thanks! But now I must prepare to carry out my own, for you cannot suppose that I have any idea of pitching my tent forever in a social circle with which we have so little in common, and where there is no longer

anything to detain me. To arrange for my departure and to avoid the necessity of explaining why the entresol should afford shelter to the voluntary exile from the first floor, I shall need to-day and to-morrow. So don't come to see me until the day after to-morrow. By that time I shall have sold Brigitte out, as they say on the Bourse, and I shall have many things to tell you.

"Tua tota,

"COMTESSE DE GODOLLO."

The Latin rendering of *Tout à vous* delighted La Peyrade, nor was he surprised at it, as Latin is a sort of second national tongue in Hungary. The two days of waiting to which he was condemned added more fuel to the ardent flame of the passion that had taken possession of him, and on the appointed day, when he reached the house on Boulevard de la Madeleine, his love had attained a white heat, of which, a few days earlier, he would not have believed himself susceptible.

This time La Peyrade was seen by the concierge's wife; but, aside from the fact that it might be supposed that he was on his way to the Thuilliers', it was a matter of indifference to him whether she knew the real purpose of his visit or not. The ice was broken now, his good fortune was official, and he was more disposed to shout it from the house tops than to make a mystery of it.

Running quickly up the stairs, he was preparing to ring the bell, when, as he put out his hand to grasp the silk cord beside the door, he found that it had disappeared.

La Peyrade's first thought was that some severe indisposition of the kind that renders the slightest noise unendurable to the sufferer might explain the removal of the missing object; but several other things that caught his eye at the same time tended to weaken that explanation, which was not, at best, specially consoling.

From the vestibule to the countess's door, a stair carpet, held in place by a copper rod on every stair, formerly made the ascent soft and pleasant to the visitor's feet; this carpet had been removed.

The door-recess was ordinarily enclosed by a porch covered with green velvet and supported by gilded rods; of this arrangement there was now no sign except some marks made upon the wall by the workmen in taking it away.

For a moment the advocate thought, in his bewilderment, that he had made a mistake in the floor, but, by glancing over the stair-rail, he satisfied himself that he had not passed the entresol. Did it mean that Madame de Godollo was already moving?

The Provençal thereupon submitted to the necessity of announcing his presence to the great lady as one does to a grisette; but the door gave back beneath his knock that sonorous hollow sound which indicates emptiness within—*intonuere cavernæ*—and at the same time he noticed, under the door at which he was vainly pleading with his clenched fist, the brighter light which indicates an unoccupied room, where there are no curtains, no carpets, no furniture to deaden the sound and diminish the light.

Forced at last to believe that the removal was an accomplished fact, La Peyrade came to the conclusion that, at the time of the rupture with Brigitte, some brutality or other on the old maid's part had driven the countess to adopt this radical and hasty measure; but how happened it that he had not been advised of it, and what was the idea of leaving him in this absurd predicament, which the common people describe so picturesquely by the expression: "Finding a wooden face?"

Before leaving the building, as if there were still room for doubt, La Peyrade decided to make one last violent assault upon the door.

"Who's that knocking as if he'd knock the house down?" shouted the concierge, attracted to the foot of the stairs by the noise.

"Doesn't Madame de Godollo live here now?" asked La Peyrade.

"Certainly she don't live here now, when she's moved away. If monsieur had told me he was going to call on her I might have saved him the trouble of breaking down the door."

"I knew that she was to give up her apartment," said La Peyrade, not choosing to appear ignorant of her purpose to move, "but I didn't think she was to make the change so soon."

"Must a' been in a hurry," said the concierge, "for she went off in a post-chaise this morning."

"Went off in a post-chaise!" echoed La Peyrade in utter amazement. "Has she left Paris, pray?"

"It's reasonable to think so," retorted the terrible

concierge; "it ain't the fashion to take horses and a postilion to move from one quarter to another."

"And she didn't tell you where she was going?"

"Ah! monsieur has curious ideas if he thinks people tell us anything!"

"No; but her letters, if any come for her after she's gone?—"

"Her letters—she told me to give them to Monsieur le Commandeur, the little old fellow who came to see her so often; monsieur must have met him up there."

"Oh! yes, to be sure," said La Peyrade, retaining his presence of mind under the blows he was receiving in rapid succession; "the little old man with the powdered wig who came almost every day?"

"Not exactly every day, but he came often: well, he's the man I'm to give Madame la Comtesse's letters to."

"And she gave you no message for others of her acquaintances?" inquired the Provençal carelessly.

"Not any, monsieur."

"Very well, my good woman," said La Peyrade; "thank you."

And he started to go.

"But I think mademoiselle must know more about it than me," said the concierge; "ain't you going up, monsieur? she's at home, and so's Monsieur Thuillier."

"No, it's no matter," said La Peyrade; "I came to acquit myself of a commission Madame de Godollo gave me. I haven't time to stop."

"Well, as I tell you, she went off this morning by post. Why, bless my soul! two hours ago, monsieur, you'd a' found her; but she went by post, so she must be a long ways off by this time."

Her fashion of always saying things twice gave this woman, who had given the Provençal such heart-rending information, the appearance of insisting upon the details which were calculated to inflict the keenest torture upon him. He left the house with despair in his heart. Aside from the distress caused by her precipitate departure, jealousy had taken possession of him, and in the agony of his horrible disappointment the most heart-breaking explanations suggested themselves to his mind:

"These diplomatic women," he said to himself, after musing an instant, "are often entrusted with secret missions, in which the most absolute discretion and extremely rapid evolutions are necessary. —But suppose," he exclaimed with a sudden transition, "she is one of those scheming creatures whom foreign governments employ as their agents? Suppose that more or less probable story of the Russian princess compelled to sell her furniture to Brigitte was the story of my Hungarian lady herself?—However," he added, his brain taking another turn in its frightful confusion of ideas and emotions, "her education, her manners, her language, everything points to a woman of high position in society; and then, if she were nothing but a bird of passage, why should she have taken so much pains to crush me?"

La Peyrade might have continued to argue for

and against his own chances for a long time to come, had he not suddenly felt himself seized around the waist, while a well-known voice cried in his ear:

"Look out, my dear advocate, for God's sake! a frightful death threatens you, you are rushing to your destruction!"

La Peyrade awoke and found himself in Phellion's arms.

The meeting took place in front of a building in process of demolition at the corner of Rue Duphot and Rue Saint-Honoré.

Stationed on the opposite sidewalk, Phellion, whose pronounced taste for building operations will be remembered, had been looking on for a quarter of an hour or more at the drama of a large piece of wall on the point of being pushed over into the street by the combined efforts of a squad of workmen; and the great citizen, watch in hand, was estimating the length of time the mass of hewn stone and plaster could continue to resist the work of destruction of which it was the object.

It was just when the danger from the impending crash was most alarming that La Peyrade, absorbed by the tumult of his thoughts, and utterly heedless of the warnings shouted at him from all sides, started to pass the spot on which it was probable that the *aërolith* would fall. Phellion, who, by the way, would have rushed forward with as little hesitation to the rescue of a stranger, saw him, and La Peyrade undoubtedly owed to him his escape from a frightful death, for, at the same moment that he was

hastily pulled back by the sturdy arm of the inhabitant of the Latin quarter the wall struck the ground a few feet away with a report like a cannon-shot and amid a dense cloud of dust.

"Are you blind and deaf, in God's name?" exclaimed the workman stationed to warn the passers-by of the danger, running up to him, and speaking in a tone whose suavity can be imagined.

"Thanks, dear monsieur!" said La Peyrade, once more on earth; "if it hadn't been for you, I should have got myself crushed to powder in a most idiotic way."

And he pressed Phellion's hand.

"My reward," replied the latter, "lies in the mere satisfaction of knowing that you were saved from such imminent peril, and I may say that that satisfaction is not unmixed with pride, for I was not two seconds out of the way in the calculation, which enabled me to fix the very moment when that formidable mass would lose its centre of gravity. But what were you thinking about, monsieur? Of the argument, no doubt, that you are to make in the Thuillier case, for the public journals have informed me of the menace which the public vengeance has caused to be held over our estimable friend's head. It's a worthy cause, monsieur, that you will have to defend; with my hand upon my conscience, and accustomed as I am, by my duties as a member of the reading committee at the Odéon, to pass judgment upon works of the intellect, I cannot say, having heard some passages of the incriminated work

read, that the tone of the pamphlet is of a nature to justify the rigorous measures that have been taken against it.—Between ourselves," added the great citizen lowering his voice, "I confess that the government has in this instance done a very paltry thing."

"That is my opinion also," said La Peyrade, "but I shall not undertake the defence; I have induced Thuillier to seek the assistance of some advocate of high standing."

"That may be good advice," said Phellion, "and, in any event, it reflects honor upon your modesty. You have seen our dear friend, no doubt? I called upon him the day the bomb burst, and I am on my way thither again at this moment. I did not find him at the time of my first visit; I found only Brigitte, who was engaged in a warm discussion with Madame de Godollo: that's a woman with a deep insight in political matters; on my word, she had predicted the seizure."

"Did you know the countess had left Paris?" said La Peyrade, seizing the opportunity to approach the subject of his momentary monomania.

"Ah! she has gone," said Phellion. "Well, monsieur, I must tell you, although I know there is little sympathy between you and her, that I look upon her departure as a misfortune; she will leave a great void in our friends' salon; I tell you this because I think it, and am not in the habit of concealing my thoughts."

"Why, yes," said La Peyrade, "she is a woman

of very great distinction, and I think I should finally have come to a good understanding with her, in spite of her prejudice against me; but this morning she suddenly went off by the post without leaving any word as to where she was going."

"By the post!" said Phellion. "I don't know if you agree with me, monsieur, but I consider that a very agreeable way of traveling, and certainly, Louis XI., to whom we owe the institution, conceived a very happy idea on that occasion, although, from another point of view, his sanguinary and despotic government was not, according to my feeble lights, entirely free from reproach. Once only in my life I used that means of locomotion, and I declare that I found it very superior, notwithstanding its inferiority in the matter of relative speed to the breakneck course of the *railways,* on which great speed is acquired only at the cost of the traveler's and the tax-payer's safety."

La Peyrade paid little heed to Phellion's pompous phraseology. "Where can she have gone?" He was seeking an answer to that question in every possible conjecture, and his preoccupation would have rendered him insensible to a much more interesting narrative; but the great citizen, having his steam up like a locomotive, continued:

"It was at the time of Madame Phellion's last accouchement. She was at Le Perche with her mother when I was informed that very serious complications had accompanied her milk-fever. A wound in the pocket is never fatal, they say; and, appalled

by the danger that threatened my wife, I went at once to the coach-office to secure a place in the mail. There was not one to be had; they had all been taken for more than a week. Thereupon, quickly forming my plan, I hastened to Rue Pigalle, and by the use of money secured a chaise and two horses, after the formality of a passport, with which I had neglected to provide myself, and without which, by virtue of a decree of the Consuls of the Seventeenth Nivôse, year XII., horses can not be furnished to any traveler—"

These last words were like a ray of light to La Peyrade, and without waiting to hear the end of the great citizen's postal odyssey, he darted off in the direction of Rue Pigalle before Phellion, left with his sentence half completed, had time to realize that he had disappeared. When he reached the royal posting establishment, La Peyrade was at a loss to know where he should apply to obtain the information he had come to ask. He therefore set about explaining to the concierge that he had a letter to forward to a lady of his acquaintance,—a very important letter that had just arrived; that the lady in question had been so thoughtless as not to leave him her address, and that it had occurred to him that he might ascertain her destination from the passport she was required to present in order to obtain her horses.

"Is it a lady traveling with her maid that I took up near the Madeleine?" asked a postilion, who was sitting in a corner of the room where La Peyrade was beginning his investigations.

"Exactly," said La Peyrade, walking hastily up to the heaven-sent postilion and slipping a crown of a hundred sous into his hand.

"Gad! she's a devil of a traveler," said the man; "she told me to drive her to the Bois de Boulogne and kept me going round and round for an hour; then we turned back to the Barrière de l'Étoile, and then she gave me a good *pourboire* and took a fiacre and told me to take the berlin to a stable-keeper's in Cour des Coches, Faubourg Saint-Honoré."

"What was the man's name?" demanded La Peyrade eagerly.

"Simonin," the postilion replied.

Armed with this information, La Peyrade started off again, and in another fifteen minutes was in the presence of the man who kept carriages to hire; he knew nothing more than this; that a lady who lived on Place de la Madeleine had sent to him to hire a berlin, without horses, for half a day; that the berlin had been sent to her in the morning at nine, and was in his carriage-house again before noon, having been brought back by a postilion of the royal post.

"It doesn't matter," said La Peyrade to himself; "I am sure now that she hasn't left Paris and that she isn't avoiding me. Very likely she pretended to be going on a journey to have done with the Thuilliers; idiot that I am, there's probably a letter waiting for me at home, telling me all about it."

Worn out with excitement and fatigue, and in order to verify more speedily the accuracy of his presentiment, La Peyrade jumped into a cab; in less

than a quarter of an hour, for he had promised the driver a large *pourboire,* he was set down on Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer.

There he had to undergo the torture of suspense. Since Brigitte had removed from the house, Coffinet, the concierge, had sadly neglected his duties, and when La Peyrade hurried to the lodge to get *his* letter which he thought he could see in the box set aside for his mail, both the Coffinets were absent and their door was carefully locked. The wife was engaged in assisting some new tenants to start their housekeeping, and Sieur Coffinet, seizing the opportunity, had allowed himself to be enticed to a neighboring cabaret, where, between two fires, he was upholding the cause of the landed proprietors against a republican, who spoke of them with but slight respect.

Not until some twenty minutes had elapsed did the worthy concierge, remembering the *landed property* entrusted to his care, decide to return to his post. We can imagine the deluge of reproaches with which he was assailed by La Peyrade. He excused himself by saying that he had been to do an important errand which *Mademoiselle* told him to do, and that he could not very well be at the door and where his masters sent him, at the same time.

He eventually handed the advocate a letter stamped Paris. With his heart rather than with his eyes the Provençal recognized the handwriting, and when he turned the envelope the crest and the

device confirmed his assurance that he had at last reached the end of the most cruel emotion he had ever undergone in his life.

To read the letter before that horrible concierge seemed to him a profanation; with a refinement of feeling which all lovers will appreciate, he treated himself to the pleasure of taking his happiness in relays, and determined not to break the seal of the blessed epistle until, in his own room, with the doors locked and nothing to divert his mind, he should be in a position to feast at his ease upon the delicious sensation whereof his heart had tasted in anticipation.

Mounting the stairs like a flash, the amorous Provençal childishly turned the key in his door, and, seated at last before his desk, after breaking the seal with reverential dexterity, was forced to press his hand against his heart, which seemed inclined to leap from his breast.

"Dear Monsieur," so ran the letter, "I disappear forever, because my rôle is at an end. I thank you for having made it as attractive as it was simple. By setting you at odds with the Thuilliers and the Collevilles, who are now aware of your real feelings toward them, and by taking pains to comment in terms most offensive to their bourgeois self-esteem upon the circumstances, in themselves passably *aggravating*, attending your abrupt and pitiless rupture with them, I am proud and happy to have done you a signal service. The little one doesn't love you and you love her only on account of the lovely eyes of her *dot*. Thus I have saved you both from a hell on earth. A charming maiden is destined for you in exchange for the bride you have so sternly

cast aside; she is richer and handsomer than Mademoiselle Colleville, and, to say a word of myself in closing, more free

"Than your very unworthy servant,

"*Femme* TORNA, COMTESSE DE GODOLLO.

"P. S.—For more ample information, call without delay upon Monsieur du Portail, annuitant, Rue Honoré-Chevalier, near Rue Cassette, Quartier Saint-Sulpice, where you are expected."

Having read the letter through, the poor man's advocate took his head in his hands; he could neither see, nor hear, nor think; he was utterly crushed.

Several days passed before La Peyrade recovered from the stroke which felled him to the ground. It was, in very truth, a terrible blow; when he awoke from the golden dream wherein the future had appeared to him in such smiling guise, he found himself in a state of complete mystification under conditions most galling to his self-esteem and destructive of his pretensions to craft and adroitness—hopelessly embroiled with the Thuilliers, and burdened with a debt of twenty-five thousand francs, —not due for a long time, to be sure,—but also under obligation to pay Brigitte ten thousand francs, which, in the interest of his own dignity, he was called upon to make good immediately; and last of all, to cap the climax of his humiliation and chagrin, he did not feel, upon searching his own heart, that he was radically cured of the passionate infatuation he had experienced for the woman who was the

author of this great catastrophe, and the instrument of his ruin.

Either this Delilah was a very great lady, occupying a position of sufficient eminence to allow her to indulge in the most compromising vagaries, and in that case she had just amused herself by playing the rôle of flirt in a farce in which he had appeared as the booby; or she was a prostitute of the highest order, who had entered the service of this Du Portail and become the agent of his matrimonial intriguing. Thus, a bad heart or an evil life was the alternative judgment that might be passed upon this dangerous siren, and in either case it would seem that she was not notably deserving of her victim's regret.

But one must put himself in the place of this child of Provence, hot-headed and hot-blooded, who, finding himself for the first time in his life face to face with love enveloped in lace and exhaling sweet perfumes, had fancied he was drinking his passion from a cup of chased gold. As one, after awaking, still retains the impression of the dream that has stirred his pulses, so La Peyrade, still in love with what had never been more than a shadow, had need of all his moral force to put aside the memory of the perfidious countess. Let us say rather, he did not cease to aspire to her; but he took care to clothe in a decent pretext his overpowering desire to succeed in finding her; he called this desire curiosity, thirst for revenge, and this was the ingenious train of argument that he thereupon deduced:

"Cérizet said something about a rich heiress; the countess in her letter implied that the whole net of intrigue she wove about me had for its object a rich marriage; the rich marriages that are thrown at people's heads aren't so plentiful that the same opportunity could have been duplicated for me in the course of a few weeks; therefore the match Cérizet mentioned, and the one that is now offered me are one and the same, and it's the same mad girl that someone is so strangely bent upon making me marry; therefore, again, Cérizet, being in the plot, must know the countess; and so, through him, I can get on her track. In any event I can glean some information as to the extraordinary solicitude for my future which has lately developed; it is very evident that a family which can put such fashionable puppets in motion to obtain its ends must occupy an important position in society; therefore I must go and see Cérizet."

And he went and saw Cérizet.

*

Since the dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale* the two old friends had not met. Once or twice at the Thuilliers', where Dutocq called but seldom on account of the distance, La Peyrade had asked the justice's clerk what he had done with his copyist.

"He never mentions you," was Dutocq's reply.

Whence he concluded that resentment, the *manet alta mente repostum*, was still alive in the vindictive usurer's heart.

But La Peyrade was not deterred by that consideration. He was not going to ask a favor at his hands; he was simply going there on the pretext of taking up anew a matter in which Cérizet had taken a hand; and Cérizet never took a hand in anything unless there was something in it for him. The chances therefore pointed to a warm and affectionate reception rather than an unfriendly one. Moreover, the advocate decided to seek the copyist at his desk; it was a less formal visit than if he had gone to his den on Rue des Poules, which was in a decidedly uninviting neighborhood, by the way.

It was about two o'clock when La Peyrade made his appearance upon the premises of the justice of the peace for the twelfth arrondissement. He passed through a room filled with a crowd of suitors, whom the placing of seals upon the property of deceased persons and their removal therefrom, the proof of

deeds executed before a notary and attested by written statements, lawsuits in process of adjustment, disputes between masters and servants, landlords and tenants, shopkeepers and customers, and lastly, infractions of the criminal law, bring constantly in contact with the court of first instance.

Without pausing in this reception-room, La Peyrade went on into a second room immediately preceding the magistrate's private office. In that room Cérizet sat writing at a wretched desk of blackened wood, opposite the seat usually occupied by a little old clerk, who was not at that moment in his place.

As the advocate entered Cérizet cast a savage glance at him, and said, without moving from his seat or pausing in his work of engrossing a judgment:

"Hallo! it's you, Sieur La Peyrade, is it? Well, you're getting your friend Thuillier into a pretty mess!"

"How are you?" La Peyrade inquired in a determined but friendly tone.

"I am still pulling an oar in the old galley, as you see," replied Cérizet; "and, to follow out the nautical metaphor, I will ask you what wind blows you here: is it, by any chance, the wind of adversity?"

La Peyrade, without replying, took a chair beside his interlocutor, then said to him gravely:

"My dear friend, we must have a talk together."

"It seems," persisted the venomous usurer, "that our relations with the Thuilliers have cooled off tremendously since the pamphlet was seized?"

"The Thuilliers are ungrateful," replied La Peyrade, "and I have broken with them."

"Whether you've broken with them or been turned out, their door is closed to you all the same, and from what Dutocq tells me Brigitte speaks of you in a more than disdainful tone. That's what comes of trying to look after your business all alone, my friend; complications come up and you haven't anyone to smooth off the corners. If you had got the lease for me, I should have been introduced to the Thuilliers, Dutocq wouldn't have gone back on you, and we'd have brought you safely into port."

"But suppose I don't want to reach port!" retorted La Peyrade with some excitement. "I tell you I'm tired to death of the Thuilliers; I broke first with them; I told them to stand out of my light; and if Dutocq has told you anything different, you can tell Dutocq he's a liar; is that clear? it seems to me that I make my meaning plain."

"But if you have such a grudge against all this *Thuillerie*, my dear man, that's just the reason I ought to have wormed my way in among them; you'd have seen how I'd have avenged you by making fools of them."

"As far as that goes, you're right," said La Peyrade, "and I wish with all my heart that I had let you loose between their legs; but I tell you again that I didn't have anything to say about the lease."

"Oh! of course," retorted Cérizet, "your conscience told you that it was your duty to suggest to

Brigitte that the twelve thousand francs I expected to make out of her might as well go into her pocket."

"It would seem," returned the advocate, "that Dutocq still pursues the honorable profession of spy which he used to practice in the Treasury Department, and, like all his brethren in that dirty business, his reports are as clever as they are veracious—"

"Look out," said Cérizet, "you're talking about my master, and in his lair."

"Well," said La Peyrade, "I came here to talk with you on business of importance; will you do me the favor to drop the Thuilliers and everything connected with them, and give me your attention?"

"Speak, my dear fellow," said Cérizet, laying aside his pen, which had thus far not ceased to fly over the stamped paper; "I am listening."

"Some time ago," rejoined La Peyrade, "you spoke to me about a marriageable young woman, of full age and wealthy, but somewhat subject to hysteria, as you euphemistically expressed it."

"Good enough!" cried the usurer; "I expected you'd come to it; you've had a lot of trouble making connections!"

"What was your idea in offering me this heiress?" asked La Peyrade.

"*Parbleu!* to have you make a magnificent match; you had only to stoop and pick it up. I was officially instructed to propose her to you, and there was no brokerage in it either, for I should have relied entirely on your generosity."

"But you weren't the only one commissioned to sound me; there was a woman employed also, wasn't there?"

"A woman?" replied Cérizet in a most natural tone; "not that I know of."

"Yes, a foreigner, quite young and quite pretty, whom you must have met in the family of my proposed bride, to whom she seems intensely devoted."

"No woman has ever been mentioned in the negotiation," said Cérizet; "I have every reason to believe that it was entrusted to me exclusively."

"What!" exclaimed La Peyrade, fixing his eyes upon the copyist in a keen and searching gaze; "have you never heard of the Comtesse Torna de Godollo?"

"Never in all the days of my life; this is the first time I ever heard the name."

"Then it must be some other party," said La Peyrade: "for this woman, after many strange preliminary manœuvres which it would take too long to tell you, formally offered me the hand of a young person much richer than Mademoiselle Colleville."

"And of age? and hysterical?" queried Cérizet.

"No, the proposition she made me was not embellished with those accessories; but, let me see, there's another detail that may put you on the track. Madame de Godollo urged me, if I wanted to push the thing, to see one Monsieur du Portail, an annuitant."

"On Rue Honoré-Chevalier?" exclaimed Cérizet quickly.

"Precisely."

"Then it's the same match proposed to you from two different directions: but it's strange that nothing was said to me about my collaborator."

"So that you not only haven't had wind of the countess's intervention," said La Peyrade, "but you don't know her, and can't give me any information about her?"

"Not at present, no," replied the usurer; "but I can make inquiries, for this way of treating me seems a bit ungracious; this double attack, though, must convince you how well you suit the family."

At that moment the office door was cautiously opened, a woman's head appeared, and a voice, which La Peyrade at once recognized, said to the copyist:

"Oh! excuse me! monsieur is busy. May I say a word to monsieur when he is alone?"

Cérizet, whose glance was as quick as his hand, noticed this fact: La Peyrade, who was seated so that the new-comer could see his face, hastily turned his head in such a way as to conceal his features from her, as soon as he heard that wheedling, drawling voice. Instead therefore of being turned brutally out of the room, which was the lot of most of the petitioners who applied to this most crabbed and least gracious of copyists, the modest visitor heard him say:

"Come in, come in, Madame Lambert; you'd have to wait too long."

"Ah! monsieur the poor man's lawyer!" cried La

Peyrade's creditor, whom the reader has doubtless recognized, when she found him looking her in the face; "oh! how lucky I am to meet monsieur! I have called several times to know if he has had time to attend to my little matter."

"Ah! yes," said La Peyrade, "I have had a number of troublesome cases on my hands which have obliged me to be away from my office frequently, but everything is all right, and it has been forwarded to the secretary."

"Oh! how kind monsieur is!" said the devotee, clasping her hands.

"How's this! you have business with Madame Lambert?" said Cérizet; "you hadn't told me that. Are you Père Picot's counsel?"

"Unluckily, no," said the woman; "my master won't take anybody's advice; he's such an obstinate, headstrong man! But, worthy sir, is it true that the family council is to assemble again?"

"To be sure," Cérizet replied, "and not later than to-morrow."

"But, monsieur, didn't the gentlemen of the royal court say that the family had no right to do what they're doing?"

"Well, yes," replied the copyist, "the court of first instance refused the application of the relations for a decree of lunacy, and the royal court dismissed their appeal."

"I should think so!" said the devotee; "the idea of trying to have a man so full of sense declared mad!"

"But the relations don't propose to let go; they're going to bring the matter up in another form, and ask for a judicial council; that's what brings the family together to-morrow, and I think it very likely that Père Picot will be put in leading-strings this time, Madame Lambert. There are some very serious allegations; it's all right to make the chicken-dance, but this plucking him till the blood comes—!"

"What! can monsieur believe—?" exclaimed the pious creature, bringing her clasped hands to her chin with a movement of her shoulders.

"I don't believe anything," said Cérizet; "I'm not the judge in the case; but the relations allege that you have misapplied considerable amounts, that you have made investments as to which they demand an investigation."

"Good God!" exclaimed the devotee; "anyone can see; I haven't a bond, a share of stock, a note, or any security of any sort in my possession."

"Oh!" said Cérizet, looking at La Peyrade out of the corner of his eye, "there are such things as obliging friends who take charge—. However, it is none of my business, every man must look out for himself; what was it you wanted to say to me, however?"

"I wanted to implore you, monsieur, and to implore Monsieur le Greffier, to be kind enough to speak in our favor to the justice of the peace; the vicar of Saint-Jacques is also to say a word for us. —The poor man," she added, bursting into tears;

"if they go on tormenting him thus, they'll kill him."

"The magistrate, I may as well tell you," said Cérizet, "is not well disposed; you saw that he wouldn't receive you the other day. As to the clerk and myself, we can't do much of anything; besides, you see, my good woman, you're too close-mouthed."

"Monsieur asked me if I had any money laid by; I can't say that I have, when, on the contrary, it's all gone for poor Monsieur Pi-i-i-cot, whom they accuse me of ro-o-obbing."

Madame Lambert had reached the sobbing stage.

"My candid opinion is," said Cérizet, "that you make yourself out a good deal poorer than you are, and if friend La Peyrade, who seems to possess all your confidence, hadn't his tongue tied by his professional duty—"

"I!" said La Peyrade hastily; "I know nothing about madame's business; she asked me to draw up a memorial for her in a matter that has nothing to do with courts or finances."

"Ah! that's it, is it?" said Cérizet; "madame came to see you about the memorial the day Dutocq met her; you know, the day after our famous dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale*, when you played the stern Roman."

As if he attached no special importance to that coincidence, he continued:

"Well, my dear Madame Lambert, I'll tell the master to speak to the magistrate, and if I get a

chance I'll speak to him myself; but, I tell you again, he's very much prejudiced against you."

Madame Lambert withdrew with profuse reverences and protestations of gratitude.

"You didn't seem to believe," said La Peyrade when she had gone, "that that woman came to see me to get me to draw up a memorial; and yet nothing is truer than that; she's looked upon as a saint in the neighborhood where she lives, and the old man they accuse her of having robbed lives solely upon her devotion to him, so far as my information goes: consequently somebody has put it into the dear woman's head to aspire to a Montyon prize, and her claims to that distinction are what she requested me to ascertain and put in proper form."

"Gad! the Montyon prizes!" cried Cérizet; "that's a happy thought, my dear boy, and we have made a mistake in not cultivating them; especially myself, for I am the poor man's banker as you are his lawyer. As for your client, it's very lucky for her that Père Picot's kinsfolk aren't members of the Académie Française, for the police court, in the sixth chamber, is where they'd like to send her to have her prize of virtue awarded.—But, to return to our matter, I was saying that, after all your twisting and turning, you'd do well to bring the thing to a head, and, like your countess, I advise you most earnestly to go and see Du Portail."

"But what sort of a man is he?" La Peyrade asked.

"A little old fellow, smooth as amber," replied

Cérizet; "he gives me the impression of having the devil's own influence in high places. Go there! it costs nothing to look, as they say."

"Yes," said La Peyrade, "it's possible that I may go, but first I want you to find out who the Comtesse de Godollo is."

"What do you care for this countess? she's nothing but a super in this affair."

"I have my reasons, however," said the advocate. "In two or three days you ought to know what to think about her, and I'll see you again then."

"My good friend," said Cérizet, "you act as if you were wasting time fiddle-faddling at the gate. Does it happen, by any chance, that we are in love with the go-between?"

"The beast of a man!" thought the advocate; "he suspects the whole thing; it's impossible to keep anything from him!—No," he continued aloud, "I am not in love, and on the contrary, I am prudent. I confess that I go into this marriage with a madwoman with a very bad grace, and before I embark on it, I want to have some idea where I'm going to put my foot. This tortuous way of proceeding doesn't tend to reassure me, and as they bring so many influences to bear, it's proper that I should seek to control them one by one. So don't try to play any games on me, and give me all the points on Madame la Comtesse Torna de Godollo you can stow away under your cap, like the items of a description in a passport; round chin, oval face; what you call saddles to fit any horse. I give you

warning that I am in a way to verify your report, and if I see that you're inclined to gull me, I'll break short off with your Du Portail."

"Inclined to gull you, monseigneur!" replied Cérizet, affecting the voice and accent of Frédérick Lemaître, "Prithee, who would dare to try conclusions with you?—"

As he uttered this somewhat mocking phrase Dutocq appeared, accompanied by his under-clerk. He had been serving warrants in the city.

"Ah!" exclaimed the clerk as he saw La Peyrade and Cérizet together, "here's the *trinity* reconstituted; but the object of the alliance, the *casus fœderis*, has fallen to pieces. In heaven's name what have you done to our good Brigitte, my dear La Peyrade? she's got a deadly grudge against you."

"And Thuillier?" asked the advocate.

It was the scene from Molière transposed, and Tartuffe seeking news of Orgon.

"Thuillier began by not being so hostile to you; but it seems that the affair of the seizure is turning out very well. Having less need of you, he's beginning to let himself be drawn into his sister's waters, and if he goes on, I don't doubt that within a few days, if the Chamber of the Council decides that there's no ground for the prosecution, he'll look upon you as a man fit to be hanged."

"Well, I'm out of it," said La Peyrade, "and when they catch me in such a scrape again!—Adieu, my dear friends," he added. "Cérizet, be alert, sure and discreet in the matter we have talked about."

When La Peyrade was in the court-yard of the mayor's office, he was accosted by Madame Lambert, who was waiting for him to come out.

"Monsieur," said the devotee with compunction, "of course doesn't believe all the villainous things Monsieur Cérizet said in his presence, and monsieur knows very well that the pittance I inherited from my uncle in England accounts for my having a little money now?"

"Very well," said La Peyrade; "but you understand that with all the reports your master's relations are spreading about, the prize for virtue is tremendously in danger."

"If it's not God's will that I should obtain—"

"You must see how important it is for you to keep the secret of the service I have done you. At the first sign of indiscretion on your part the money will inevitably be returned to you, as I told you it would."

"Oh! monsieur need have no fear!"

"Well, adieu, my good woman," said La Peyrade in a patronizing tone.

"Madame Lambert!" cried a nasal voice from a window on the staircase as they separated.

It was Cérizet, who had suspected that such a colloquy might take place, and had come to verify his suspicions.

"Madame Lambert," he repeated, "Monsieur le Greffier has returned, and if you want to speak to him—"

There was no way for La Peyrade to prevent this

conference, in which he realized that the secret of his loan might run a great risk of being divulged.

"Decidedly I'm not in a lucky vein," he said as he walked away. "I don't know where all this will end."

Brigitte's instinctive love of domination was so overpowering, that it was without regret, and, if we must say it, with a certain secret joy, that she contemplated Madame de Godollo's disappearance.

She felt that the woman was overwhelmingly superior to her, and this superiority, although it counted for much in the ordering of her household, made her ill at ease; and when their separation took place—upon a plausible and straightforward pretext, by the way, and without any harsh words—*Miss* Thuillier breathed freely once more. She did as kings do over whom an imperious but necessary minister has long domineered, and who kindle fires of joy in their hearts on the day that death delivers them from the master whose services and rival influence they have impatiently endured.

Thuillier was not far from feeling a similar sense of relief with regard to La Peyrade. But Madame de Godollo represented only refinement, while the advocate was utility itself in the household on which they had turned their backs at almost the same moment; and, after a few days had passed, to use an expression common in prospectuses, a crying need of the Provençal made itself felt in the *good friend's* political and literary existence.

The municipal councillor was suddenly entrusted

with the preparation of an important report. He could not decline the task, which his reputation as a man of letters and an accomplished writer, the result of the publication of his pamphlet, had caused to be assigned to him; and, in the face of the perilous honor conferred upon him by his colleagues in the General Council, he was dismayed by his consciousness of his own friendlessness and incapacity.

In vain did he shut himself up in his study, gorge himself with black coffee, fashion quills into pens, write a score of times upon paper of exactly the same shape and size he had seen La Peyrade using: *Report to the members of the Municipal Council of the City of Paris*, and immediately beneath these words a superbly executed MESSIEURS, and rush out from his study in a rage, complaining of a frightful hubbub, which *snapped the thread of his ideas*, if anybody so much as closed a door, opened a closet or moved a chair in the house;—all this did not advance the work or even make a beginning.

It happened luckily enough that Rabourdin wanted some change made in the arrangement of his apartment, and he came, as he properly should, to submit his wishes to the landlord. Thuillier granted his request almost with eagerness, and he then spoke to his tenant about the report he had to draw up, saying that he would be glad to have his ideas on the subject matter.

Rabourdin, to whom no question of administration was unfamiliar, was not slow to put forth a great number of concise and lucid remarks upon the

subject laid before him. He was one of those men who are absolutely indifferent as to the intellectual capacity of the persons to whom they are talking; a fool or a wise man, so long as he listens to them, affords them the same opportunity to think aloud, and one acts as a spur to their minds in almost the same degree as the other. When he had finished, Rabourdin realized that Thuillier had not understood him, but he had listened to himself with pleasure; he was grateful, too, for his auditor's attention, obtuse though he was, and for the readiness with which, as landlord, he had granted his request.

"By the way," he said as he went out, "I must have something among my papers touching the subject you are considering; I will look it up and send it to you."

That very evening he did, in fact, send Thuillier a voluminous mass of manuscript. Thuillier passed the night drawing inspiration from that invaluable store of ideas, and finally extracted from it more than enough to make a remarkable paper, even though he made an extremely bungling use of his plunder.

When it was read two days later to the Council the report achieved a great success, and Thuillier returned home, radiant over the congratulations he had received. From that moment, which marked an epoch in his life—for when he was an old man he used frequently to speak of "the report I had the honor to present to the General Council of the

Seine"—La Peyrade sank considerably in his esteem; it seemed to him thenceforth that he could get along very well without the Provençal, and he was encouraged in his dreams of emancipation by another stroke of good fortune which came to him at almost the same moment.

A parliamentary crisis was imminent; this fact caused the ministry to reflect, that, in order to deprive its adversaries of a campaign cry that always tells upon public opinion in the hands of the opposition, they had best relax the rigorous measures to which the press had been subjected for some time past. Thuillier, being included in this hypocritical amnesty, received a letter one morning from the advocate he had retained in La Peyrade's stead. This letter informed him that the Chamber of the Council had dismissed the complaint and ordered the embargo raised.

Thereupon Dutocq's prophecy was fulfilled. With this weight off his chest, Thuillier assumed the insolent air of a man accused on insufficient evidence, and, chiming in with Brigitte, he began to talk of La Peyrade as a scheming rascal whom he had supported, who had *drained* him of large sums of money, and had then behaved with the vilest ingratitude, and that he was only too glad that he was no longer numbered among his friends. Orgon was in full revolt, and he would almost have cried, with Dorine:

> "A shoeless beggar when he came,
> With costume scarcely worth the name."

Cérizet, to whom Dutocq related all these indignities, would not have failed to repeat them, all hot, to La Peyrade; but the interview at which the clerk's clerk was to furnish information concerning Madame de Godollo did not take place at the time fixed. La Peyrade had found light on his own account. This is what had happened:

Still haunted by the thought of the fair Hungarian, while awaiting, or rather without awaiting the result of Cérizet's investigations, he beat up Paris in every direction, and was frequently seen, like the idlest of saunterers, in all the most frequented places; his heart told him that, sooner or later, he would fall in with the object of his ardent search.

One evening—it was about the middle of October—the weather was magnificent, as it often is in Paris at that season, and upon the boulevards where the Provençal was airing his love and his melancholy, people were still living in the open air and the scene was as animated as in the middle of summer.

On the Boulevard des Italiens, formerly called Boulevard de Gand, as he walked along in front of the Café de *Paris,* skirting those rows of chairs, where, mingled with some few women from the Chaussée d'Antin, accompanied by their husbands and children, a whole flower-garden of nocturnal beauties blooms each night, waiting only for some gloved hand to pick them, La Peyrade received a terrible blow; he thought that he spied his adored countess in the distance.

She was alone, in a brilliant costume which seemed hardly justified in view of the place and of the fact that she was alone; perched upon a chair in front of her was a white lapdog, which she was caressing with her lovely hands.

Having made sure that he was not mistaken, the advocate was about to rush up to the celestial vision, when he was anticipated by a *lion* of the most killing variety; without throwing away his cigar, without even raising his hat, the young spark entered into conversation with his beau ideal. When she saw the Provençal, as pale as death, preparing to accost her, the siren was afraid, no doubt, for she rose and hastily took the arm of the man who was talking to her.

"Have you your carriage, Émile?" said she; "the Mabille is to be closed to-night and I want to go there."

The name of that unsavory resort, hurled thus at the advocate's head was a godsend, nevertheless, for it nipped in the bud his absurd impulse to accost, on the arm of a man suddenly constituted her knight, the unworthy creature of whom, a few moments before, he had been thinking with unbounded tenderness.

"She isn't worth the trouble of insulting!" he said to himself.

But as lovers are not easily dislodged from a position when they have once taken it up, the Provençal did not as yet consider that he knew all there was to be known.

Not far from the seat the Hungarian had left, another woman was seated, also alone; but this one was well along in years, she wore feathers in her bonnet, and concealed beneath an old Cashmere shawl, whose colors were dimmed by age, the pitiful remains of elegance that had lost its lustre, and threadbare, old-fashioned splendor.

In short there was nothing imposing in her aspect, nothing to command respect, but quite the reverse. So La Peyrade took a seat beside her, and said to her without ceremony:

"Do you know that lady who has just walked away leaning on a gentleman's arm, madame?"

"To be sure, monsieur,—I know almost all *these* ladies who come here."

"And her name?"

"Madame Komorn."

"Is she as impregnable as the fortress whose name she bears?" continued the advocate.

The reader will remember that, at the time of the insurrection in Hungary, the famous citadel of Komorn was dinned into our ears incessantly by novelists and the press, and La Peyrade knew that an inquiry always succeeds better if conducted with apparent indifference and unconcern.

"Has monsieur any idea of making her acquaintance?"

"I don't know about that," replied the Provençal, "but she's a woman who makes a man think about her."

"And who is very dangerous, monsieur!" rejoined

the old lady, "a spendthrift, and not at all inclined to be generous in acknowledging what one does for her. I know what I'm talking about; when she came here from Berlin six months ago, she was very warmly recommended to me."

"Aha!" exclaimed La Peyrade.

"Yes; at that time I had a very nice little estate in the outskirts of Ville d'Avray, with a park, preserves, and running water for fishing, and as I hadn't money enough to lead a château life, and was bored to death there, all by myself, several gentlemen and ladies said to me: 'Madame Louchard, you ought to get up some parties at which everyone pays his own scot—'"

"Madame Louchard!" cried La Peyrade; "are you a relation of Monsieur Louchard, the sheriff?"

"His wife, monsieur, but judicially separated;—a horrible man, who would be glad to get me back with him; but I can forgive everything except lack of respect; to think that one day he dared to raise his hand against me!—"

"Well, you got up the parties," said La Peyrade, leading his companion back to the question, "and Madame de Godollo—I mean Madame Komorn—"

"Was one of the first to stay with me; at my house she made the acquaintance of an Italian, a good sort of man,—a political refugee, he was, but one of the grand kind. You understand that it didn't suit me to have intriguing going on in my house; yet the man was so dead in love, and so unhappy because he couldn't make an impression on Madame

Komorn, that I finally interested myself in this affair of the heart, which turned out excellently for the lady in the way of money, for she got large sums out of the Italian; well, would you believe that, when I happened to need a little money and asked her to oblige me, she refused and left my house, dragging her lover after her; by the way, he's had no reason to be proud of his acquaintance!"

"Why, what happened to him?" asked La Peyrade.

"It happened to him that the serpent knows every language in Europe, and that she's bright to the ends of her nails, and smarter even than she is bright; so it appears that, being in communication with the police, she turned over to the government certain correspondence that the Italian was carrying on, and that got him expelled from France."

"And since the Italian's departure, Madame Komorn—"

"Since then she has had several adventures and has overturned several fortunes; but I thought she had gone. She entirely disappeared for more than two months, and the other day she suddenly reappeared, more brilliant than ever. For my part, I wouldn't advise monsieur to run after her; however, monsieur looks like a Southerner, so he must be of a passionate nature, and all I have told him may have only served to excite him; in point of fact, as you're forewarned, there's no great risk to run—when you know your saint you honor him accordingly; nobody can deny, however, that she's

ON THE BOULEVARD DES ITALIENS

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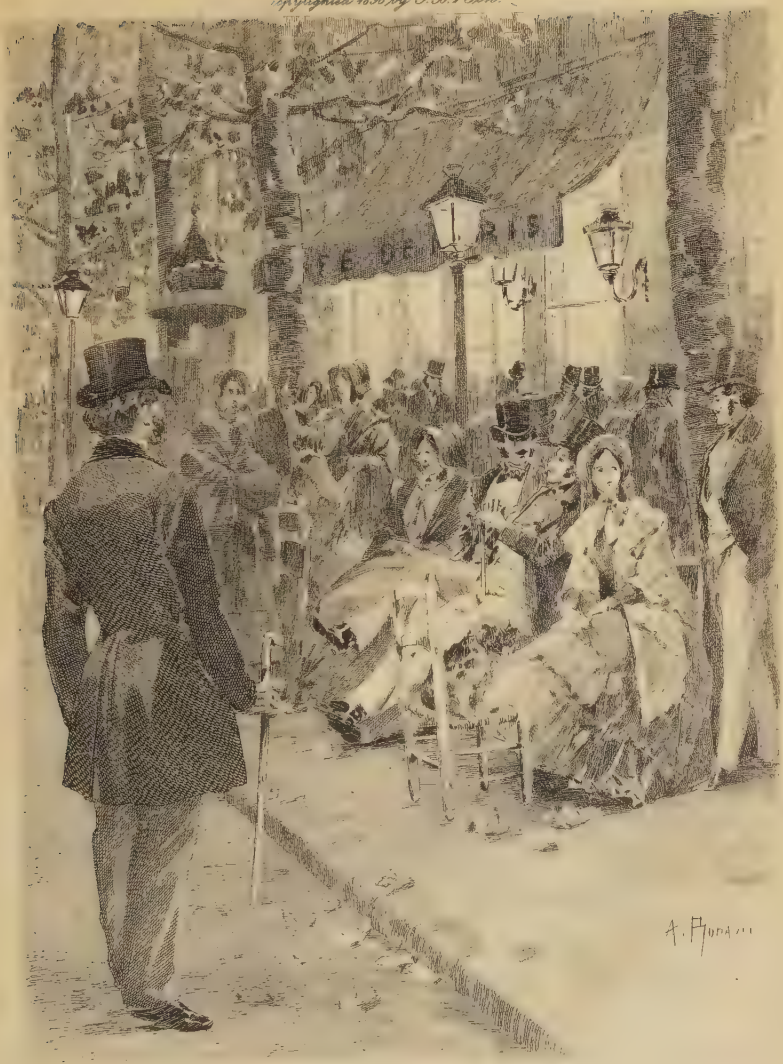

a fascinating woman,—oh! very fascinating—. She was very fond of me, although we parted on bad terms, and just now she asked me for my address and said she should come and see me."

"I will think of what you say, madame," said La Peyrade, rising and saluting the old lady.

His salutation was returned with great coolness; his abrupt departure did not indicate a *serious man.*

*

From the gaiety with which the advocate prosecuted his investigations, it might be thought that he was suddenly cured; but this external appearance of disinterestedness and sang-froid was only the unaccustomed calm of the atmosphere that announces a tempest.

On leaving Madame Louchard, La Peyrade jumped into a cab, and there, a deluge of tears, like that Madame Colleville had witnessed on the day he thought he was outwitted by Cérizet in the matter of the overbid, was the first explosive manifestation of his grief.

The investment of the Thuillier household, prepared with so great patience, at the cost of such bitter sacrifices, rendered of no effect; Flavie thoroughly avenged for the shameful farce he had played with her; his affairs in a worse state than when Cérizet and Dutocq shut him up, a devouring wolf, in the sheepfold from which he had allowed himself to be driven like a stupid sheep; his hate-inspired projects against the woman who had so easily got the better of all his cleverness, and the still vivid remembrance of the fascinations to which he had succumbed; such were his thoughts and emotions during the long night when the little sleep he secured was broken by horrible dreams.

The next day La Peyrade could not think; he was

attacked with a violent fever, and the symptoms became so serious that the doctor whom it was thought best to call took measures to ward off what seemed likely to prove a sharp attack of congestion of the brain: bloodletting, leeches, applications of ice to the head, were the agreeable climax of the Provençal's dream of love; but let us hasten to add that the physical crisis was followed by complete mental cure; the advocate soon ceased to feel for the Hungarian traitress anything more than contempt which did not even rise to thoughts of revenge.

Once more upon his feet and confronted by the question of his future, as to which he had lost so much ground, La Peyrade asked himself if he should not try to renew his connection with the Thuilliers, or if he should turn in the direction of the wealthy insane girl, who had an ingot where other people have their brains; but everything calculated to remind him of his disastrous campaign aroused in him an invincible repugnance, and, besides, what assurance could he feel in treating with this Du Portail who made use of such instruments to accomplish his purposes?

The great upheavals of the heart are like storms which purify the atmosphere; they teach a moral lesson and counsel strong and generous resolutions. La Peyrade, as the result of the cruel disappointment he had undergone, subjected himself to a thorough scrutiny. He asked himself wherein lay the advantage of the base, ignoble existence he had been leading for more than a year. Might he not

find better and nobler employment for the eminent faculties he felt that he possessed? The bar was open to him as to other men; it was a straight, broad road which might enable him to satisfy all the cravings of legitimate ambition. Like Figaro, who, to procure the bare means of subsistence, displayed more science and more calculating skill than had been displayed in governing all the Spains for a hundred years past, so had La Peyrade, in order to install himself and maintain his standing in the Thuillier family, and to marry the daughter of a clarionet-player and a flirt, put forth more wit, more art, and—we must say the word, for, in a corrupt society, it is an element to be reckoned with—more dishonesty than would have sufficed to give him a fair start in an honorable career.

"I've had enough," he said to himself, "of dealing with Dutocq and Cérizet; enough of the nauseating atmosphere one breathes in the circle of the Minards, the Phellions, the Collevilles, the Barniols and the Laudigeois! I must be off to Paris," he added, "and shake off the yoke of this *intramural* province, a thousand times more absurd and niggardly than the departmental provinces; they have, at least, an individuality of their own, and a dignity *sui generis,* in contrast to its commonplace pettiness; they make no concealment of what they are, the antipodes of Parisian life; the other is only a parody of it."

La Peyrade therefore called upon two or three attorneys, who had offered to give him briefs in

some cases of secondary importance; he accepted those which came to him directly, and three weeks after his rupture with the Thuilliers he had ceased to be the poor man's advocate and had become an advocate in regular practice.

He had already tried several causes successfully, when one morning a letter was handed to him, which made him exceedingly anxious.

The chief executive officer of the order of advocates requested him to come to his office at the Palais during the day, as he had *something of serious importance* to say to him.

The Provençal at once thought of the Boulevard de la Madeleine property; if that affair had come to the ears of the disciplinary committee it would bring him directly within the jurisdiction of that tribunal, whose severity was well known to him.

Now, this Du Portail, upon whom he had not as yet called despite his conditional promise to Cérizet, might have heard the whole story of the overbidding from Cérizet himself. It was very evident from his employment of the Hungarian that all means were good to him. In his hot eagerness to bring about the mad girl's marriage, had not the maniac adopted the plan of denouncing him? Had not his persecutor, seeing that he was starting out courageously and with some prospect of success on a career wherein he might attain independence and fortune, taken it upon himself to close that career to him? Certainly there was enough probability in this idea to make the advocate await with anxiety

the hour when it would be possible for him to ascertain the exact explanation of the threatening summons.

While he was eating his frugal breakfast, lost in conjecture, Madame Coffinet, who had the honor of keeping house for him, came, to ask if he could receive Monsieur Étienne Lousteau. (See *A Great Man of the Provinces, etc.*)

Étienne Lousteau! La Peyrade was confident he had seen that name somewhere.

"Show him into my office," he said to the concierge.

And a moment later, he greeted his caller, whose face was not altogether unfamiliar to him.

"Monsieur," said the visitor, "I had the honor of breakfasting with you at Véfour's some little time ago; I was invited to that function, the serenity of which was somewhat disturbed, by your friend Monsieur Thuillier."

"Ah! very good," said the advocate, drawing forward a chair, "you are on the editorial staff of a newspaper?"

"Editor-in-chief of the *Écho de la Bièvre,* and I wanted to talk with you on the subject of that very sheet. Do you know what has happened?"

"No," said La Peyrade.

"What! you don't know that the ministry met with a terrible reverse yesterday, and that, instead of resigning, as you would naturally expect, they are to dissolve the Chamber and appeal to the country?"

"I knew nothing of it," said La Peyrade; "I haven't read the papers this morning."

"Well, you see, all the parliamentary ambitions are in the field now, and, if I am well informed, Monsieur Thuillier, already a member of the General Council, proposes to come forward as a candidate in the twelfth arrondissement."

"It is very likely that he has that intention," said La Peyrade.

"Very well, monsieur, I would like to place at his disposal an instrument whose value I think you fully realize. The *Écho de la Bièvre,* a newspaper devoted to the interests of a special class, may exert a decisive influence on the election in that quarter."

"And you are disposed to support Thuillier's candidacy in your journal?" asked the advocate.

"Better than that," replied Étienne Lousteau; "I propose that Monsieur Thuillier should purchase the paper, become its proprietor, and then he can make what use he pleases of it."

"But in the first place," inquired La Peyrade, "what's the condition of the enterprise? As you just now said, it is a journal devoted to a special interest, and I have rarely seen it; indeed it would be quite unknown to me except for the remarkable article you were good enough to devote to Monsieur Thuillier's defence at the time his pamphlet was seized."

Étienne Lousteau bowed his thanks and resumed:

"The journal is in excellent condition, and we can let you have it on easy terms, for we were about to discontinue its publication."

"That's strange—a journal that's prospering!"

"On the contrary it is the most natural thing in the world," replied Lousteau; "the founders, who are all engaged in the great hide and leather industry, established the paper with a definite object. That object is attained; the *Écho de la Bièvre* has become an effect with no cause behind it. In such a case, the best thing for shareholders, who don't like annoyance and the petty details of the business, and who aren't hunting for small profits, is to liquidate."

"But does the paper really pay expenses?" asked La Peyrade.

"That's something we have never bothered our heads about," Lousteau replied; "we didn't depend upon subscriptions; the main purpose of the undertaking was to exert an immediate and direct influence on the Department of Commerce, in order to procure the removal of restrictions on the importation of foreign hides; you can understand that, outside of the tanning business, that purpose isn't calculated to arouse the enthusiasm of many readers."

"I thought, however," persisted La Peyrade, "that a newspaper, even though its action was confined within narrow limits, was a lever, whose power depended on the number of its subscribers?"

"Not those papers which have a definite object," replied Lousteau in a superior tone; "under those circumstances, on the other hand, subscribers are an embarrassment, because you must always think

about pleasing them and amusing them; and while you're doing that, the point you had in your mind is neglected. A newspaper whose aims are circumscribed should be a sort of pendulum, which, swinging constantly upon a fixed point, fires the cannon at the Palais Royal at a given hour."

"But tell me," said La Peyrade, "what value you attach to a publication which has few or no subscribers, which does not pay expenses, and which has thus far been devoted to an object entirely different from that for which it will be used thereafter?"

"Before answering your question," said Lousteau, "I will ask you another: do you think of purchasing?"

"That depends," said the advocate; "of course I must see Thuillier; but I may remark now that he has no sort of familiarity with matters connected with the press; that in his somewhat bourgeois ideas the proprietorship of a newspaper is a ruinous thing; and so if, in connection with a plan entirely strange to him and which will frighten him at first, you have to ask any considerate figure, it's no use to propose the thing; it's clear to my mind that it would amount to nothing."

"Oh! no, we should be reasonable, as I told you," rejoined Lousteau; "the proprietors give me carte blanche; but you must remember that we already have offers from various directions, and in giving Monsieur Thuillier the preference, we consider that we are doing him a very special favor. When may I hope for your reply?"

"To-morrow, I think; shall I have the honor of calling upon you at your home, or at the office of the paper?"

"Neither; to-morrow I will be here at the same hour, if satisfactory to you."

"Perfectly," said La Peyrade, bowing out his guest, in whom he thought he could detect a larger supply of self-sufficiency than of ability.

From the manner in which the Provençal received the suggestion that he should act as an intermediary with Thuillier, the reader will have understood that a sudden revolution had taken place in his ideas. Even if he had not received the disquieting letter from the president of the order of advocates, the new prospect opening before Thuillier by the maturing of his parliamentary ambition would have given him food for thought. Evidently his *good friend* was coming back to him, and his frenzied desire to be chosen a deputy would deliver him to him bound hand and foot. Was it not the time for him, surrounding himself with all the precautions justified by his memories of the past, to revert to the affair of his marriage to Céleste? Far from being an obstacle to any of the good resolutions inspired by his disappointment in love and his brain fever, this dénouement would strengthen him in them and assure his success; but if, as was to be feared, he was about to receive from the council of his order a reprimand of the sort that wrecks a man's career, in that case it would seem no more than natural that he should seek the remedy where the harm had been

done; it was his instinct and he had the right to look for shelter to the Thuilliers, his accomplices and the authors of his disaster.

With all these thoughts at work in his brain La Peyrade betook himself to the *batonnier's* office at the Palais.

He had guessed rightly: his whole course in the matter of the purchase of the house, had been called to the attention of his fellows in a very well written and very circumstantial account thereof, and, while he agreed that an anonymous denunciation should be received with great suspicion, the high functionary of the order informed the incriminated advocate that he was ready to listen to his explanation.

La Peyrade did not dare to take refuge in a system of absolute denial; the hand that he believed to have dealt the blow, seemed to him too determined and too adroit not to have fortified itself with proofs.

But while admitting that the charges were founded upon facts, he tried to put those facts in a favorable light. He saw in a moment that his answer was not considered a triumphant refutation, for the *bâtonnier's* conclusion was as follows:

"Immediately after the close of the vacation, I will make my report to the council of the order upon the denunciation and the statements with which you have met it. It is for the council alone to decide a matter of this importance."

Thus summarily dismissed, La Peyrade felt that his professional future was sadly endangered; but he had a respite, and, in case of conviction, a plan

for securing a place to lay his head. He went therefore and put on his robe, which he was still entitled to wear, and betook himself to the fifth chamber, where he had a cause to argue.

As he left the court-room, laden with one of those boxes of documents, which are commonly tied with a strip of cotton, and being too bulky to be carried under the arm are held upon the hand and forearm, and supported against one side of the chest, the Provençal strode through the *Salle des Pas Perdus* with the brisk gait characteristic of the advocate who has to be in two or three places at once. Whether he was really heated by his forensic exertions, or was simply pretending to be *swimming in perspiration*, so as to announce to all comers that his gown was not, as with many of his confrères, a show garment simply, but a coat of mail, he was mopping his forehead with his handkerchief as he walked along, when he saw in the distance *his* Thuillier, who had just espied him in the centre of the great hall, and was working his way toward him.

There was nothing surprising in the meeting. When he left home he told Madame Coffinet that he was going to the Palais and should be there until three o'clock, and bade her send there anybody who might inquire for him.

Not choosing to make it too easy a matter for Thuillier to accost him, La Peyrade suddenly turned about, as if he had just remembered something, and sat down on one of the benches that garnish the circumference of the vast antechamber of justice.

There he untied his bundle, took out a paper, buried himself in it up to the ears, and assumed the bearing of one who has not had time in the silence of his office to examine the case which his fluent speech and ready grasp of a subject will enable him to try on the wing. Or this re-examination of documents might equally well be recognized as the act of the conscientious and scrupulously accurate advocate, who refreshes his memory, and casts a final glance over his batteries before advancing to the attack.

It goes without saying that the Provençal watched Thuillier's manœuvres out of the corner of his eye. He, believing that La Peyrade was seriously occupied, was now debating whether he should accost him.

After much going and coming the municipal councillor at last made up his mind, however, and steered straight for the point where he had been, in thought, for some minutes.

"Hallo! Théodose," he cried, as soon as he was within hailing distance; "so you come to the Palais now?"

"Why I should say," replied La Peyrade, "that it's much the same with advocates at the Palais as with Turks at Constantinople, where one of my compatriots gravely asserts that many of them are to be seen. You're the one it is surprising to see here!"

"Not at all," said Thuillier carelessly; "I'm here about that cursed pamphlet business. Is there any such thing as an end to *your* law? I was summoned to the attorney's office again this morning.

However, I don't regret it, since I owe to that bother the lucky chance of meeting you."

"I am delighted to see you too," said La Peyrade, tying up his package, "but I must leave you, for I have an appointment; however, you are going to the attorney's office yourself, aren't you?"

"I have just come from there," said Thuillier.

"Did you see Olivier Vinet, your dearest foe?" asked La Peyrade.

"No," said Thuillier, naming another magistrate.

"The deuce! it's very funny," observed the advocate, "but it would seem that that young deputy attorney has the gift of ubiquity; he's been in the court-room ever since this morning, and he's just finished summing up in the case I was trying a moment ago."

Thuillier blushed, and replied, extricating himself as best he could:

"Bless me! I don't know those fellows, and I must have mistaken one of them for another."

La Peyrade shrugged his shoulders and said aloud to himself:

"Always the same, playing sharp and squirming, and unable to go straight to his object!"

"Whom are you talking about?" asked Thuillier with a decidedly disconcerted air.

"Why, of you, my dear fellow, who take us for imbeciles; as if everybody didn't know more than two weeks ago that the affair of your pamphlet had fallen into the water. Why were you summoned to the attorney's office?"

"I was summoned there," replied Thuillier with some embarrassment, "to pay some costs or other for entering the judgment. Is anyone supposed to understand all their scrawls?"

"And they selected for *summoning* you," continued La Peyrade, "the very day on which the *Moniteur*, by announcing the dissolution of the Chamber, made you a candidate in the twelfth arrondissement."

"Why not?" said Thuillier; "what connection is there between my candidacy and any costs that I'm responsible for?"

"I'll tell you what connection there is," retorted La Peyrade dryly. "The attorney's office is, before everything, amiable and obliging. 'Well, well,' it said to itself, 'here's our dear Monsieur Thuillier a candidate for the Chamber; he must be a little hampered now by his attitude toward his ex-friend Monsieur de la Peyrade, with whom he would like very well to be on good terms about this time; we must relieve him from his embarrassment; we'll *summon* him to pay some costs he doesn't owe and he'll come to the Palais where La Peyrade comes every day; in that way he can meet him without seeming to have it in mind, and will be spared the necessity of a step that would wound his self-esteem.'"

"Well, that's where you're mistaken," said Thuillier, breaking the ice at last, "I've tried so little to be sharp about it that I've just come from your rooms,—there! your concierge sent me here."

"Good!" returned La Peyrade, "I much prefer

frankness; you can get along with people who play with their cards on the table. Well, what is it you want of me? did you come to talk about your election? I'm already at work on it."

"Really?" said Thuillier; "how?"

"Look at this," replied La Peyrade, fumbling under his gown and taking a paper from his pocket; "here's what I scratched down in the court-room just now while my opponent's advocate was wandering around his subject in the most approved style."

"What is it?" inquired Thuillier.

"Read it and you'll see."

The paper contained the following:

SCHEME FOR A NEWSPAPER, SMALL PAGE, AT THIRTY FRANCS PER YEAR.

Estimating the edition at five thousand, the monthly cost will be:

Paper, 12 francs for 5 reams,	1,860 fr.
Composition,	2,400
Printing,	450
A director,	250
A clerk,	100
A manager, to act as cashier also,	200
A mailing clerk,	100
Folders,	120
An office-boy,	80
Covers and office expenses,	150
Rent,	100

Stamps and mailing, ...	7,500 fr.
Editing, stenographic news, ...	1,800
Total per month,	15,110 fr.
" " year,	181,320

"Do you propose to start a newspaper?" asked Thuillier in dire distress.

"I don't propose anything about it," said La Peyrade; "you're the one to be asked if you propose to be a deputy."

"Of course I do, for you planted that ambition in my head when you put me forward for the General Council. But just think, my dear fellow, of putting out a hundred and eighty-one thousand three hundred and twenty francs! Have I got a fortune that will stand such a load as that?"

"Yes; in the first place," replied La Peyrade, "you could beyond question stand that expenditure without putting yourself out at all; indeed, compared with the end you seek to obtain, it's not at all exorbitant. In England men make much greater sacrifices to get a seat in Parliament. But, in any event, I beg you to observe that all the figures in this scheme are put very high. Indeed there are some items that can be cut out altogether; for instance, you won't need any director;—you, who are an old accountant and I, a former newspaper man, will undertake the direction,—and we'll do it without winking; in the same way it's absurd to talk about rent; you have your old apartments on Rue

Saint-Dominique, which aren't let as yet, and they'll make a magnificent newspaper office."

"All that," said Thuillier, "is a saving of twenty-four hundred francs a year."

"That's something, but your mistake consists in reckoning on the expenditure for a year. When are the new elections to be held?"

"In two months," Thuillier replied.

"Very good; for two months it would cost you thirty thousand francs, and that's on the supposition that the paper hasn't a single subscriber."

"True," said Thuillier, "the expense is certainly much less than I thought at first; but, after all, do you think a newspaper indispensable?"

"Indispensable to this extent, that, unless I have that weapon in my hands, I'll have nothing to do with the election. You don't realize, my poor friend, that by going to live across the river you lost a tremendous lot of ground, electorally speaking. You aren't a resident of the quarter now and they can kill you with a word—what the English call *absenteeism*. Your game is much harder to play now."

"I admit that," Thuillier replied; "but for this newspaper, in addition to the money, we must have a title, a manager and editors."

"The title we have already; the editors will be you and myself and a few young men whom we can find in Paris by the shovelful; I have a man in view for manager."

"The title will be—?" asked Thuillier.

"The Écho de la Bièvre."

"But there's one sheet of that name already."

"That's just how I come to be advising you to go into the thing. Do you think I would be fool enough to try to start a new paper? The *Écho de la Bièvre!* why the title itself is worth a mint of money when it's a question of backing up a candidate in the twelfth district. Say but one word and I'll place that mint of money in your hands."

"How so?" queried Thuillier with interest.

"Parbleu! by buying it; you can get it for a song."

"You see!" said Thuillier in a discouraged tone, "there's the purchase money that you didn't count!"

"You're frightened at trifles," said La Peyrade shrugging his shoulders; "we have many other difficulties to deal with."

"Other difficulties?" repeated Thuillier.

"Parbleu! do you imagine," retorted La Peyrade, "that, after what has passed between us, I propose to harness myself valiantly on to your election car, without knowing just what I'm to get out of it?"

"Why," said Thuillier, somewhat astonished, "I thought that friendship was an exchange of services."

"Agreed; but when the exchange consists in always giving on one side and in nothing on the other, friendship soon wearies of that method of division, and demands something a little better balanced."

"But, my dear fellow, what can I offer you that you haven't already refused?"

"I refused because it was offered insincerely, and flavored from Mademoiselle Brigitte's vinaigrette; any self-respecting man would have done what I did. 'To give and keep is no good,' so goes the old Palais saying, and that's precisely what you did."

"For my own part, I think that you took offence without any sort of reason; but the negotiation can begin again."

"Very good," said La Peyrade, "but I don't propose to have anything made to depend on your success in the election or upon Mademoiselle Céleste's whims. I demand some serious, definite agreement; give and take; short reckonings make long friends."

"I agree with you perfectly," was Thuillier's reply, "and I have always been too square with you to dread any precautions you may choose to take; but what guarantees do you intend to ask?"

"I intend that your affairs shall be managed by Céleste's husband, and not by Théodose de la Peyrade."

"If we rush things as fast as we can, as Brigitte *observed,* we must wait almost a fortnight, and think of doing nothing for two of the eight weeks that separate us from the election!"

"Day after to-morrow," replied the Provençal, "our banns can be published at the mayor's office; in the interval between the two publications there's something we can do: to be sure it isn't one of the steps that can't be retraced, but at all events it's a moral obligation and a long step forward; we can

execute the contract at your notary's; and lastly, if you decide to buy the newspaper, I shouldn't be afraid of your going back on me, for you wouldn't want a useless horse in the stable, and without me the weapon would be too hard for you to handle!"

"But suppose, my dear fellow," Thuillier objected, "that the thing should cost too much, after all?"

"I needn't say that you will pass judgment for yourself on the conditions of the sale; I haven't any desire to buy a pig in a poke, any more than you have. To-morrow, if you authorize me, I don't say to make a bargain, but to say that the paper might be what you want, I'll talk the matter over with the vender, and you don't doubt that I'll look out for your interests as if they were my own."

"All right, my dear fellow," said Thuillier, "go ahead!"

"And as soon as the trade is concluded, we'll fix the day for signing the contract?"

"Whenever you choose," said Thuillier, "but you agree to use all your influence to succeed?"

"As I would do for myself, and that isn't all talk either; for I have already received some hints as to the possibility of my being a candidate myself, and if I were revengeful—"

"Certainly," said Thuillier humbly, "you would make a better deputy than I. But I don't think you're old enough."

"There's a better reason than that," said La Peyrade; "you are my friend, I find that you are

the same as you used to be, and I would keep the promise I gave you. I would like to have it said of me:

"He makes deputies, and has no wish to be one."

Now I must leave you and go to my appointment. To-morrow, at noon, come to my office: I shall have some news for you."

*

The man who has been in the newspaper business will return to it; this prognostication is as infallible as the familiar one with reference to drunkards.

Whoever has had a taste of that feverishly busy, yet relatively idle and independent life; whoever has wielded that sovereignty over intellect, art, talent, glory, virtue, ridicule, aye, even over truth itself; whoever has occupied that rostrum which he erects with his own hands, and discharged the duties of that magistracy to which he appoints himself of his own authority; whoever, in short, has been, though but for an instant, the mouthpiece of public opinion, which pours out its approbation on him alone by its unanimous vote—such a one, when he is relegated to private life, looks upon himself as an exile, as a royal personage on the way to Cherbourg; and with what ardor does he put forth his hand to seize the crown once more, when the opportunity is offered!

For the simple reason that La Peyrade had been a journalist some years earlier, Étienne Lousteau, when he placed at his disposal the weapon called the *Echo de la Bièvre*, no matter how inferior the temper of the weapon might be, had aroused in him all the instincts of a newspaper man.

The paper had failed; La Peyrade thought that he could put it on its feet again. The subscribers, by the vendor's own admission, had always been

few and far between; he would bring to bear upon them a powerful and irresistible *compelle intrare.* In view of the circumstances under which the affair presented itself to him, might he not look upon it as an interposition of Providence? Threatened with the loss of his position at the bar, the Provençal would by this means gain, as we said, a strong *detached* position; and if he should perchance be driven to defend himself, he might assume the offensive, and himself demand an accounting.

In the eyes of the Thuilliers the newspaper would make him a very important personage; he would have more opportunity to conduct the election to a successful end, and at the same time by involving some of their capital in an enterprise, which, without his assistance, could not fail to be a bottomless gulf, a delusion and a snare, he attached them in some sense to himself, and need fear nothing more from their whims or their ingratitude.

This prospect, quickly grasped at the time of Lousteau's visit, at once dazzled the Provençal, and we have seen the peremptory fashion in which Thuillier was led on to take a passionate interest in the discovery of this philosopher's stone.

The price demanded was fabulously small; a five-hundred-franc note, for which Lousteau never accounted to the shareholders, procured the transfer to Thuillier of the plant, the title, the furniture and the good-will of the journal, which they at once set about reorganizing.

While this reorganization was in progress, Cérizet

took occasion one morning to pay a visit to Du Portail, with whom La Peyrade was more than ever determined to have nothing to do.

"Well," said the little old man to the poor man's banker, "do you know what effect the report sent to the *bâtonnier* produced on our man? has anything leaked out at the Palais?"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Cérizet, whom frequent communication with the man of Rue Honoré-Chevalier had placed upon a certain footing of familiarity with him, "a heap of difference that has made! the eel's got away from us again; neither gentleness nor violence have any effect on that devil of a man; if he is in bad odor with the *bâtonnier*, he's on better terms than ever with *his* Thuilliers. Utility, as Figaro says, shortens distances. Thuillier needed him to help him out with his candidacy in Quartier Saint-Jacques, so they kissed and made up."

"And of course," said Du Portail, without betraying any particular emotion, "the marriage is to take place at an early date?"

"The first thing," said Cérizet; "and then there's another machine at work too; that wild man has persuaded Thuillier to buy a newspaper; he's going to make him sink forty thousand francs or so in that speculation. The other, when he's once got himself into the scrape, will want to get his money back; so as far as I can see they're allies again for an indefinite time."

"What is this paper?" asked Du Portail indifferently.

"A cabbage leaf called the *Écho de la Bièvre,*" said Cérizet disdainfully, "a paper that an old journalist, who was walking on his uppers, succeeded in getting started in the Mouffetard quarter by the curriers, whose industry, you know, is the chief one in the quarter. From a political and literary point of view the affair amounts to nothing, but from the Thuillier standpoint it's a master-stroke."

"Oh! for a local election the instrument is not so badly chosen!" observed the annuitant. "La Peyrade is a talented, active fellow, with great mental resources—he may make something of this *Écho.*—Under what banner does Messire Thuillier fight?"

"Thuillier," replied the banker of the market-place, "is an oyster, and has no opinions of his own. Until the publication of his pamphlet, he was, like the whole middle-class, a fanatical conservative; but since the seizure, he has gone over to the opposition; his first station would probably be the Left Centre; but if the wind of the election should blow from another quarter, he'd just as soon go over to the Extreme Left; self-interest is the measure of such fellows' convictions."

"Damnation!" said Du Portail, "this scheme of our advocate's may attain the importance of a political danger, from the point of view of my opinions, which are very conservative and very strongly with the government."

After a moment's reflection, he added:

"You were a newspaper man once, eh! *courageous* Cérizet?"

"Yes," the usurer replied; "indeed I managed one once with La Peyrade,—an evening paper. A pretty trade we were in then, and we were well paid for it!"

"Well," said Du Portail, "why shouldn't you go into journalism again with La Peyrade?"

Cérizet looked at him in amazement.

"Well, well!" said he, almost in the same breath, "are you the devil himself, Monsieur Annuitant, that you know everything?"

"Yes," said Du Portail, "I have a pretty good idea of things—. But just what has taken place between you and La Peyrade?"

"Why, he came to me last night, remembering my experience in the business, and not knowing who else to take, and offered me the managership."

"I didn't know it," said the annuitant, "but it was probable. Did you accept?"

"Only conditionally. I asked for time to reflect. I wanted to know what you would think of the offer."

"*Parbleu!* I think that we must make the most of the evil we can't prevent; I prefer to know that you're inside the combination rather than outside."

"All right! but there's a difficulty in the way of my going in; La Peyrade knows that I have debts and he doesn't want to put up the thirty-three thousand francs security that have got to be deposited in my name. I haven't them, and if I had I wouldn't put them in limbo and expose them to the attacks of my creditors."

"You must still have," said Du Portail, "a good part of the twenty-five thousand francs La Peyrade paid you a little more than two months ago?"

"I have just twenty-one hundred and two francs fifty centimes," replied Cérizet; "I counted it up yesterday; the surplus has gone to pay the noisiest of my debts."

"Then, if you've paid them, you don't owe them now."

"True, what I've paid; but I owe what I haven't paid."

"What's that! your debts were more than twenty-five thousand francs?" asked Du Portail incredulously.

"Does a man fail for less than that?" returned Cérizet, with the air of a man stating an axiom.

"I see that I must put up the money for you," said Du Portail ill-humoredly; "but the question is whether the advantage of your presence in the concern is fairly represented by the interest on three hundred and thirty thousand three hundred and thirty-three francs thirty-three centimes."

"Bless me!" said Cérizet, "if I was once fairly settled down with Thuillier, I shouldn't despair of putting La Peyrade on bad terms with him in short order. In managing a newspaper, there is constant inevitable clashing, and by always upholding the opinion of the fool against the wise man, I could exalt the self-esteem of the one, and wound the self-esteem of the other so cruelly that it would soon be impossible for them to live together. Then, you

said something about political danger; a manager, as you must know, when he knows enough not to be a man of straw, can always secretly impart what direction he pleases to the thing."

"There's some truth in what you say," replied Du Portail; "but to checkmate La Peyrade is what I care most about."

"Well, I think I have another little underhand way of bowling him over with the Thuilliers."

"Tell me it, in God's name!" exclaimed Du Portail impatiently; "you twist around the pot as if there's much to be gained by playing sharp with a man like me."

"You remember," rejoined Cérizet, making haste to explain himself, "that at the time, Dutocq and I were much puzzled by La Peyrade's impertinence in suddenly being able to pay that twenty-five thousand francs?"

"Well," said the annuitant eagerly, "have you discovered the source of that extraordinary sum in the advocate's hands? Is there something a little shady about it?"

"I'll tell you," said Cérizet.

And he told the story of Madame Lambert in all its details, adding however that, after he had cornered the woman in the office of the justice's clerk on the day of her meeting with La Peyrade, he had been unable to extort any admission from her, although the dear lady's attitude went far to confirm his own conviction and Dutocq's.

"Madame Lambert, Rue du Val-de-Grâce, number

9, at the house of Sieur Picot, professor of mathematics," said Du Portail, making a note of the information. "Very good, my dear Monsieur Cérizet," he added; "come and see me to-morrow."

"But remember that I must give La Peyrade an answer during the day," said the usurer. "He's in a great hurry to conclude the sale."

"Very well! you will accept, asking twenty-four hours' delay to deposit your security, and if, after I've made my inquiries, we can see a point to be gained by not going into the business, you will be clear of it by breaking your word; you can't be summoned before the Assize Court for that."

Independently of the inexplicable power of fascination which he wielded over his agent, Du Portail never lost an opportunity to remind him of the somewhat shady circumstance which was the starting-point of their connection.

The next day, when Cérizet stood once more in the annuitant's presence, the latter said to him:

"You guessed rightly; being obliged to conceal the existence of her little hoard, the Lambert woman, who wanted to arrange for the concealment, at good interest by the way, conceived the idea of calling on La Peyrade; her pious exterior commended her to his confidence, and the money was delivered to him without a receipt. How was Dutocq paid?"

"With nineteen thousand-franc notes and twelve five-hundred."

"That's it exactly," continued Du Portail, "and

there's no more room for doubt. Now, what use do you expect to make of this information with Thuillier?"

"I intend to hint to him that La Peyrade, to whom he proposes to give his god-daughter, is loaded down with debts; that he is borrowing under the rose at usurious interest; that in order to square himself he'll gnaw the newspaper to the bones; that the fact that he's deeply in debt may come out at any minute, and put the candidate he's taken under his wing in the worst possible position."

"All that's not bad," said Du Portail, "but there's another more conclusive and more radical use to be made of the discovery."

"What is it, master?" said Cérizet; "I'm listening to you."

"Thuillier," said Du Portail, "is still at a loss to explain the seizure of his pamphlet, isn't he?"

"He is that," the usurer replied; "why La Peyrade told me only yesterday, wanting to show me how far Thuillier's simplicity would go, that he had fooled him with the most absurd nonsense. The honest bourgeois is convinced that the seizure was instigated by Monsieur Olivier Vinet, the attorney-general's deputy. There was a time when that young magistrate aspired to Mademoiselle Colleville's hand, and in the worthy Thuillier's eyes the rigorous measures of the attorney's office are a way of taking vengeance for the rebuff one of its members has undergone."

"Splendid!" said Du Portail; "to-morrow, as a

preface to another version of which you will be the organ, Thuillier will receive from Monsieur Vinet a very earnest and emphatic protest against the abuse of power in which he so foolishly put faith."

"Yes?" exclaimed Cérizet with interest.

"Thereupon another explanation will have to be hunted up," continued Du Portail, "and you will inform Thuillier that he is the victim of a horrible police plot. You know, I suppose, that the police serve no other purpose but to get up plots?"

"Perfectly," said the usurer, "I have signed declarations to that effect twenty times when I was working on republican papers, and when—"

"You were *courageous* Cérizet," interposed Du Portail. "Now, here is the police plot: The government was much disturbed to see Thuillier elected, outside of its influence, to the General Council of the Seine; it looked askance at an independent citizen and patriot, who, in his canvass, had squarely dispensed with its approval; furthermore it was aware that the great citizen was preparing a pamphlet upon the always delicate subject of the finances, a subject with which this dangerous adversary was extremely familiar. Thereupon, what did this essentially corrupt government do? It bought over a man, whose advice it had heard that Thuillier was in the habit of taking, and, in consideration of the sum of twenty-five thousand francs, which is a mere trifle for the police, this perfidious adviser undertook to insert in the pamphlet a sentence or two which might render its author amenable to the

assizes. Now, how can this explanation leave a doubt in Thuillier's mind when he learns that, between night and morning, La Peyrade, who, to his knowledge, hadn't a sou to his name, paid Dutocq that exact sum of twenty-five thousand francs to a centime?"

"The devil!" exclaimed Cérizet, "the trick's not badly laid. Men like Thuillier believe whatever anyone tells them about the police."

"You can imagine, then," continued Du Portail, "whether Thuillier will want to keep such a fellow-worker with him, and whether he'll be in a hurry to give him his god-daughter."

"You're a shrewd man, monsieur," said Cérizet, once more bestowing his approbation; "but I must confess that I have some scruples about the part I'm expected to play. La Peyrade came and offered me the managership of this paper, and if I should work to put him out of it—"

"And what about the lease he cheated you out of, notwithstanding the most solemn promises,—have you forgotten that?" retorted the annuitant. "Besides, aren't we trying to provide for the welfare of this obstinate fellow, who persists so stubbornly in defeating the most kindly intentions?"

"Well," said Cérizet, "the result will absolve me from blame, and I am going resolutely ahead in the ingenious path you have marked out for me. But there's one thing that occurs to me: I can't throw this revelation at Thuillier's head for some days; it must be led up to, whereas the

deposit of the security must be made almost immediately."

"Listen to me, Monsieur Cérizet," said Du Portail in an authoritative tone; "if La Peyrade marries my ward, it is my intention to recognize your services, and your pin-money will be thirty thousand francs. So thirty thousand on one side and twenty-five on the other make just fifty-five thousand francs that the matrimonial combinations of your friend La Peyrade will have put in your pocket. But I don't intend to pay until I go out, as they do at the side-shows at a fair. If you put up the security with your own money, I have no fear: you'll find a way to prevent its falling into the clutches of your creditors. If, on the other hand, it's my money that's at stake, you won't be as eager or as ingenious about keeping it out of danger. So arrange to put up thirty-three thousand francs on your own account; if we're successful, it's so much money invested at nearly a hundred per cent. That's my last word, and I won't listen to any objections."

Cérizet hadn't time to offer any; at that moment the door of Du Portail's study, where this scene took place, was suddenly thrown open, and a slender, fair-haired young woman, whose face beamed with angelic sweetness, rushed into the room.

Across her arms lay the figure of a child wrapped in fine white linen swaddling-clothes.

"There!" said she; "that bad Kate insisted it wasn't the doctor; I knew I saw him come in!

Well, doctor," she continued, addressing Cérizet, "I'm not satisfied with the little one's condition, not satisfied at all; she's pale and she's grown very thin. I think it's her teeth."

Du Portail motioned to Cérizet to accept the rôle thus suddenly imposed upon him, and which reminded him of that he had for a moment thought of assuming in the famous Cardinal affair.

"Evidently, it's the teeth," he replied, "children always suffer more or less at such a time; but there are no symptoms that need alarm you, dear madame."

"Do you think so, doctor?" replied the mad girl —for the reader has doubtless recognized Lydie, Du Portail's ward—; "but look at her poor little arms, how they are dwindling away!"

And, removing the pins from the clothes, she disclosed to Cérizet a bundle of rags, which, in the poor mad creature's eyes, represented a lovely pink and white infant.

"No, no," said Cérizet, "she has grown a little thin, to be sure, but the flesh is hard and firm, and the *facies* excellent."

"Poor little darling!" said Lydie kissing her dream effusively, "she seems to me better since morning. What must I give her, doctor? pap doesn't agree with her, and she won't drink broth either."

"Well, give her a little bread soup," said Cérizet. "Does she like sweet things?"

"Oh! she adores them," said the mad girl; and her face lighted up; "is chocolate good for her?"

"To be sure," said Cérizet; "but not flavored with vanilla, that's too heating."

"What they call hospital chocolate then," said Lydie, in the tone of a mother listening, as to a god, to the doctor who soothes her alarm.—"Uncle," she added, addressing Du Portail, "ring for Bruneau, pray, and let him go at once and buy a few pounds at Marquis's."

"Bruneau has just gone out," replied Du Portail; "but there's no hurry; he'll go some time to-day."

"See, she's asleep," said Cérizet, who was not sorry to put an end to this scene, in which he could not fail to find something painful, notwithstanding his shriveled nature.

"So she is," said the mad girl, rearranging the linen and rising; "I'll go and put her to bed. Adieu, doctor, it's very kind of you to come sometimes without being sent for; if you knew how unhappy poor mothers are, and how much good you do them with a word or two!—Ah! there she is crying now—"

"It's very easy to see why; she's falling over, she's so sleepy; she'll be much better off in her cradle."

"Ah! I'll go and play her that sonata of Beethoven's that little papa liked so much; it's wonderful how that soothes one. Adieu, doctor," she said again, stopping in the doorway; "adieu, good doctor!"

And she threw him a kiss.

Cérizet was deeply moved.

"Now tell me," said Du Portail, "if she isn't an angel; never a wrong act, never a sharp word. Sad sometimes, but always from anxiety which has its source in maternal solicitude; that's what makes the doctors confident that the reality, taking the place of her constant hallucination, may restore her reason. Well, there's what that idiot of a La Peyrade refuses, although accompanied with a magnificent *dot!* But he must come round, or I'll lose my name! Stay," he added, as they heard the sound of a piano, "listen; what talent! Mad woman like her—why there are hundreds of thousands of women in their right mind who can't compare with her, and who are no saner than she is, except on the surface."

When Beethoven's sonata, executed with a breadth of feeling and delicacy of touch that filled the copyist with admiration, had reached its last measure, he said:

"I agree with you, monsieur, that La Peyrade refuses a treasure, an angel, a pearl, and if I were in his place—. But we'll bring him round. I no longer serve you with zeal simply, but with passion, with fanaticism."

As Cérizet was concluding this oath of fidelity, just outside the room in which Du Portail had received him, he heard a woman's voice which was not Lydie's.

"Is the dear commander in his study?" asked the voice, with a slight foreign accent.

"Yes, madame, but monsieur is not alone; go into the salon and I will speak to him."

This reply was in Kate's voice, the old Dutch governess.

"Look, go this way," said Du Portail hastily to Cérizet.

And he opened a secret door, which led him directly to the stairway through a dark corridor.

The leading article by which the new management of a newspaper begins its connection with the public—its *profession of faith,* as it is technically called—is always a difficult and laborious affair to produce. In this particular case, it was advisable at the same time, if not actually to bring forward Thuillier as a candidate, at least to hint at his candidacy. The draft of this manifesto, after it had been drawn up by La Peyrade, was discussed for a long time. The discussion took place in Cérizet's presence, for he, in accordance with Du Portail's advice, had assumed the duties of manager; he had, however, not yet deposited his security, availing himself of the latitude commonly allowed by the government for complying with that formality, in case of a change of proprietorship.

Under the adroit handling of the master-knave, who, first of all, constituted himself Thuillier's flatterer, this discussion at more than one point became very stormy and verged upon the acrimonious; but, inasmuch as the articles of association left the decision with La Peyrade in everything connected with the editing of the paper, he ended by sending to the printer, on his own authority, the article just as he had written it.

Thuillier was enraged at what he called an abuse of power, and the next morning, being alone with Cérizet, he eagerly poured his chagrin and his bitter thoughts into the bosom of the faithful manager, thereby affording a ready-made and perfectly natural opportunity of planting the slanderous revelation, concocted by the man of Rue Honoré-Chevalier.

The information was insinuated with a circumspection and art, by which a far cleverer man than Thuillier might well have been deceived. Cérizet pretended to be afraid of the secret extorted from him by his enthusiasm in the cause and by his instinctive sympathy with the *loftiness of mind and character which attracted one's attention at once in Thuillier.* That gentleman reassured the traitor, promising him that he should not be in any way involved in the explanation to which his disclosure might lead. Thuillier would be supposed to have received his information from another source, and, if need were, he would direct suspicion upon Dutocq. Leaving the dart in the wound, Cérizet went out to make some necessary arrangements for a final settlement of the matter of the security.

This scene took place at the office of the paper. Since the purchase Thuillier came to the office two hours earlier than necessary and passed the day there, tiring everybody out with his officious activity; in the evening he returned, and almost slept there; in the few moments that his own family did catch a glimpse of him, there were such lamentations over the fatigue caused by the multiplicity of

his occupations as might have led one to fear that he would give way under the burden and in the end endanger his health.

Tortured by the terrible revelation, Thuillier could not remain quiet; he felt the need of confiding his woes to somebody, of taking counsel as to his proper attitude in view of such an infernal discovery. So he sent for a cab, and quarter of an hour later had told everything to his Egeria, that is to say, to Brigitte, his beloved sister.

Brigitte had entered a very emphatic protest against all the steps determined on by Thuillier during the past few days. In the first place she would have had nothing more to do with La Peyrade, even in the interest of her brother's election to the Chamber. She had done him wrong, the best of reasons for wishing him ill. In the second place, in the event that that schemer, as she called him, should marry Céleste,—the dread of seeing her own authority encroached upon endowing her with a sort of second sight, so that she ended by instinctively probing all the black depths of the Provençal's character,—she declared that under no circumstances and for no consideration would she live in the same house with him.

Insane with political ambition Thuillier had taken his own course; later, he hoped to cure his sister of her prejudices. But, when the subject of the newspaper came up, Brigitte's opposition was so hot that bitter words were exchanged.

"Ruin yourself, my dear," she said to Thuillier;

"you're the boss; a fool and his money are soon parted!"

But when the purchase was made, and Brigitte found that she was consulted on various details of administration, in which she thought she could detect a new field for her ardor for housekeeping; when she was allowed to appoint two folders; when she had succeeded in securing the appointment as office boy of Coffinet, her concierge on Rue Saint-Dominique, so that she reduced his salary as concierge two hundred francs by reason of the multiplication of offices; when she had been entrusted to purchase calico for the curtains in the editorial sanctum, lamps, fire-shovels and tongs, and had been requested to call from time to time and look over the way the inkhorns were washed and the offices swept, and attend to other petty details of order and cleanliness, she receded from her ill-humor in a great measure: so that, when she heard her brother's tale of woe, she received it, not with reproaches, but with a sort of song of triumph, in celebration of the probable increase of her power.

"So much the better!" she cried, "that we know at last he's a spy! I always suspected it, the hypocrite. Kick him out without any explanation. We don't need him on the paper. This Monsieur Cérizet, who's so well-meaning a man, according to your say, will find us a new editor. Besides, Madame de Godollo, when she went away promised to write to me; as soon as we are in correspondence she won't have any trouble in finding us some one!

Our poor Céleste! a pretty chicken we were going to give her!"

"You go too fast!" replied Thuillier; "La Peyrade's only accused, my dear; we must hear him first; and there's an agreement that binds us both."

"Ah! yes," said Brigitte. "I see what you're coming to; you'll let him twist you round his finger again. An agreement with a spy!—As if there could be such things with those fellows!"

"Come, come! be calm, my dear Brigitte," replied Thuillier; "we mustn't go losing our heads. Certainly, if La Peyrade doesn't furnish me with an explanation, clear, categorical and convincing, I have decided to break with him, and you'll see I'm no moulted fowl; but Cérizet himself isn't certain, it's mere inference, and I simply came to consult you to see whether I ought to demand an explanation or not."

"There's no doubt about it," said Brigitte; "you must have one, and a thorough one, or I won't own you for a brother of mine."

"That's enough," said Thuillier going out solemnly, "and you'll see if we weren't made to understand each other."

*

The installation of the *Écho de la Bièvre* in the suite of rooms on Rue Saint-Dominique d'Enfer was still far from complete, for it had been very hurried; the former quarters on Rue des Noyers, in the shabbiest of houses, were not for a moment deemed habitable, and in the schedule of the furniture included in the deed, Thuillier was greatly misled.

This furniture might have been inventoried as follows:

1. Three tables of blackened wood;

2. Six chairs stripped of their straw, or nearly so, like the famous Bologna lute, immortalized by Molière;

3. A set of pigeon-holes, also black, used for the classification, by numbers, of the articles printed in the paper;

4. A sandstone fountain, with a wicker covering; this article was decidedly out of fashion, but would hold perhaps twelve pails of water;

5. Three candlesticks and a pair of snuffers, the illumination under the former management of the *Écho de la Bièvre* having never attained the dignity of the *Aurora* candle;

6. A carafe and two glasses;

7. Nine empty bottles, several of which, if one might believe the printed labels, once contained *real* Jamaica rum, and *veritable* Swiss absinthe.

But the thing that finally stamped the character of the establishment, and gave the lie to the famous proverb as paraphrased by Léon de Lora: *Shoemakers are always the worst warmed* of men,* was this;—in a closet in the editorial rooms was a magnificent supply of peats of the largest calibre, dry, compact, solid; merchandise, in a word, selected with the utmost care, and proving beyond question that the founder-shareholders had passed that way.

Having made the inventory, Thuillier, after the first half-hour of disappointment, realized that he must be up and doing; so he leaped into a cab and was driven to Rue Chapon. The next day, one of the rooms of the new suite, over the door of which a painter was instructed to inscribe the sacramental words: *Business Office and Cashier,* was cut in two by a partition of brass lattice-work, waist-high; on each side of the wicket through which the money for subscriptions was to pass, a curtain of green glazed cloth was hung on rods by Mademoiselle Brigitte.

In the editorial rooms, also designated by an inscription, beneath which were these words in smaller letters: *The Public not Admitted,* were a dozen cherry-wood chairs, a standing writing-desk in oak, and a large oblong table not yet covered with the green serge cloth Mademoiselle Thuillier was instructed to purchase at second-hand, a case of boxes; hanging against the wall a clock called a *cartel*, which imitated the chimes in a village church when it struck;

* *Chauffés.* The proverb, not paraphrased, reads: *Cobblers are always the worst shod* (chausses) *of men.*

and two old maps drawn by Samson, *Geographer to His Majesty*, formed a very adequate provisional equipment.

But when Thuillier, returning from his conference with Brigitte, entered the editorial quarters, the finishing touch had just been put to the establishment of the paper; an apprentice from the printing-office entered bringing a ream of letter-paper, with the name and address of the *Écho* at the head. Until the letter-head is printed it cannot be said that a newspaper exists. The letter-head is, in a way, its baptism; this is the reason why all founders of public sheets begin by attending to this symbolical detail;—they are afraid that their creation will die without having been sprinkled.

Thuillier found La Peyrade at his post as editor-in-chief; but for the last fifteen minutes the advocate had been considerably embarrassed by the arbitrary authority he had reserved for himself in the choice of articles and editors.—Always urged forward by his family, and as a result of his appointment on the reading committee at the Odéon, Phellion had come to offer his services as *theatrical* editor.

"My dear sir," he said, addressing La Peyrade, after asking Thuillier how his health was, "I went to the play a great deal in my youth; the development of the stage, during my long career, has continued to have a special attraction for me, and the white hairs which to-day crown my brow do not seem to my mind to form an obstacle to my giving

your interesting publication the advantage of my study and experience. As a member of the reading committee at the Odéon, I have drawn my inspiration from the latest springs of knowledge, and, if I were quite sure of your discretion, I would go so far as to impart to you the fact that among my papers it might not be impossible to find a certain tragedy called *Sapor,* which, in my prime, procured me some success as a reader in the salons."

"Well, why do you not try putting it on the stage now?" said La Peyrade, trying to gild the refusal which he was compelled to administer. "We might assist you in that attempt."

"Certainly," said Thuillier, "any manager of a theatre to whom we should recommend the work—"

"No," rejoined Phellion. "In the first place, as a member of the reading committee at the Odéon, having to pass judgment upon others, it would not beseem me to descend myself into the arena. I am an old athlete, whose rôle it is to judge the blows he himself can no longer deal. In that sense criticism is altogether within my competence, especially as I have certain ideas which I think quite new, as to the manner of writing a theatrical *feuilleton.* The *Castigat ridendo mores* should be, according to my feeble lights, the great law, let us rather say, the only law of the theatre. I would, therefore, deal pitilessly with those works, pure children of the imagination, in which morality has no share and which a prudent mother—"

"Forgive me," said La Peyrade, "for interrupting

you; but before allowing you to take the trouble of developing your poetical ideas, I should tell you that we have already made arrangements for our theatrical criticisms."

"Ah! that is different," replied Phellion; "an honest man has only his word."

"Yes," said Thuillier, "we have some one engaged; we were far from hoping that you would offer us your honorable collaboration."

"Well," said Phellion, become a schemer,—for there is a mysterious something in the newspaper atmosphere which goes to the head, especially of the bourgeois,—"since you are kind enough to think that my pen might be capable of rendering you some service, perhaps, under the head of *Variétés,* detached thoughts upon different subjects, which for that reason I have not hesitated to describe as *diverse,* would be calculated to arouse some interest."

"Yes," said La Peyrade, with a mischievous intonation Phellion did not detect, "*thoughts,* especially if they were in the style of La Rochefoucauld or La Bruyère.—What do you think about it yourself, Thuillier?" he added.

He had reserved the right to leave to the proprietor, as often as possible, the responsibility of refusing.

"Why, I imagine," said Thuillier, "that thoughts, especially if they're detached, aren't likely to have much sequence."

"Evidently," said Phellion, "detached thoughts implies a great number of subjects over which the

author allows his pen to range without undertaking to form them into a whole."

"Then," said La Peyrade, "you would sign your full name?"

"Oh! no," rejoined Phellion in dismay; "I shouldn't want to put myself on exhibition in that way."

"This modesty, which, however, I understand and applaud, decides the question; the thought is an individual fact which imperatively demands to be personified in a name. You can see yourself: *Diverse Thoughts, by Monsieur Three Stars,* tells the public nothing."

Seeing that Phellion was preparing to remonstrate, Thuillier, who was in a hurry to try conclusions with the Provençal, determined to cut the matter short.

"My dear Phellion," said he, "I ask your pardon for saying that we cannot any longer enjoy the pleasure of your conversation, but we have to talk with La Peyrade about a very important article, and in the newspaper business this devilish time does fly so! If you please, we'll postpone the question to some other day.—Madame Phellion is well?"

"Perfectly well," replied the great citizen, rising, apparently not wounded by his dismissal. "When will the first number appear? It is awaited with great interest in the arrondissement."

"To-morrow our profession of faith will appear, I think," said Thuillier, escorting him to the door; "and it is high time, for, with this background of old boxes, which in journalistic parlance we call

bears, we should soon put subscribers to flight. However, my dear fellow, you will receive the paper; and we shall see you again soon, shan't we? Bring us the manuscript anyway; La Peyrade's way of looking at it is a little arbitrary perhaps."

Having thrown this balm upon the wound, and Phellion having taken his leave, Thuillier rang for the office-boy.

"You will remember that gentleman who has just gone out?" asked Brigitte's brother.

"Yes, m'sieu, he's got a funny enough pate for that! and then, it's Monsieur Phellion; haven't I drawn the string for him more than two hundred times!"

"Well, when he comes again neither Monsieur de la Peyrade nor myself is ever in. Remember that order; I mean it; now, leave us."

"The devil!" exclaimed La Peyrade, when the partners were left alone, "what a way you have of dealing with bores! But, look out! there may happen to be electors among them, and you did well to tell Phellion that we would send him the paper, for he's an important man in that quarter."

"Nonsense!" said Thuillier, "can we afford to have our time all taken up by these dreaming duffers coming to offer us their collaboration? Anyway, I didn't lie to Phellion, for we have to talk together, and to talk very seriously; so take a seat and listen!"

"Do you know, my dear man," rejoined La Peyrade with a laugh, "that journalism has transformed

you into a very solemn creature? *Take a seat, Cinna!* Augustus must have said it in much the same way."

"Cinnas, unfortunately," said Thuillier, "are much more common than people think."

He was still acting under the impulse of the promise he had made Brigitte, and he intended to be savagely ironical; the top had not yet lost the violent rotary motion imparted to it by the old maid's whip.

La Peyrade sat down beside the round table. As he could not fail to be perplexed by this exordium, in order to keep himself in countenance he seized the great scissors used for the purpose of clipping ready-made editorial articles from other papers, and began to cut and slash a sheet of paper containing the draft of an article written by Thuillier but not completed.

When the Provençal was seated, Thuillier was not yet ready to begin; he rose and walked toward the door, which was partly open, intending to close it. But at that moment it was thrown wide open and Coffinet appeared.

"Will monsieur," he said to La Peyrade, "receive two ladies who wish to speak with him?"

"Who are they?" asked the advocate.

"Two ladies very well dressed; they look like mother and daughter, and the daughter ain't to be sneezed at."

"Shall I have them shown up," said La Peyrade to Thuillier, "or shall I receive them in the reception room?"

"Let them come up as long as they were told you were in," Thuillier replied; "but try to get rid of them soon."

And the proprietor of the *Écho de la Bièvre* began to stride up and down the room with his hands behind his back; there was a suggestion of Napoleon in his attitude.

Coffinet's judgment as to the toilette of the two visitors who were thereupon admitted to the sanctum, was decidedly open to revision. A woman is well dressed, not necessarily, when she wears rich and costly clothes but when her toilette, which may be extremely simple, is noticeable for its mysterious harmony of form and color distinctly adapted and appropriate to its graceful wearer. Now a very diminutive bonnet, called *bibi,*—in vogue at the time—with waving plumes, set so far back that it seemed designed to protect the shoulders rather than to make a frame for the face; a voluminous French cashmere shawl worn with the awkwardness and strangeness of a young bride; a dress of Scotch silk with huge figures and a triple row of flounces; much too great a profusion of chains and gewgaws, although her gloves and shoes were beyond reproach; such was the costume of the younger of the two ladies. The other, who seemed, in a way, to be in tow of her frisky companion, was short and thickset, with a very high color, and was clad in a dress, a shawl, and a hat, in which an experienced eye would at once have recognized, if not productions of the *Temple* an unmistakable second-hand

aspect. It almost always happens that actresses' mothers are dressed on this economical plan, and such a one beyond any question La Peyrade had now before him; condemned to do service for two generations, the clothes they wear reverse the natural order of things and ascend from descendants to ancestors.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" asked La Peyrade, bringing forward two chairs.

"Monsieur," said the younger of the two visitors, who had entered the room first without ceremony, "I have come at the suggestion of one of your brethren at the Palais, Monsieur Minard, advocate."

"Ah! very good," said the Provençal; "to what special matter does he desire to call my attention?"

"Monsieur, I am a dramatic artist, and I first saw service in this quarter, which leads me to hope that the local newspaper will be favorably disposed toward me; I have just left the Luxembourg theatre, where I have filled the position of *jeune première* for some time."

"And you are now?"

"At the Folies, monsieur, where I am engaged for the Déjazets."

"At the Folies?" said La Peyrade in a tone which called for further explanation.

"The Folies-Dramatiques," interposed, with an affable smile, Madame Cardinal whom the reader cannot have failed to recognize; "these young women have a way of shortening names like that;

for Délassements-Comiques they say *Délass-Com;* for my part, I've always told 'em: 'That's wretched form; in business they string things out instead of shortening 'em. For instance, in the *fish trade* they won't say: *Ray*, and done with it, but: *Ray, ray, all alive O!* I like that much better.'"

"Mother!" said the young woman sharply, and in an imperious tone due to the fact that Madame Cardinal's voice had, from habit, taken on something of the old fish vender's twang.

"And you are to make your début soon?" asked La Peyrade.

"Yes, monsieur, in a fairy play where I wear five costumes; as a page, a little drummer boy for the children's corps of the Imperial Guard, a great flirt, as a leading soubrette and in the costume of the fairy Lilas, in which I appear at the end surrounded by Bengal lights."

"Very well, mademoiselle," said La Peyrade, "I will tell the theatrical editor to pay particular attention to your first appearance."

"You'll encourage her a bit, won't you?" said Madame Cardinal in a wheedling tone. "She's so young! in the first place, it's not to be talked about, but she works day and night and I can swear to it."

"Mother," said Olympe, authoritatively, "they'll decide for themselves; it's all I ask if monsieur will promise to take some notice of my first appearance. There's lots of plays at the Folies that these gentlemen don't take any notice of; but, as I say, being a child of the quarter—"

"Very good, mademoiselle!" said La Peyrade, in a tone signifying that the interview was at an end. "My brother Minard is well, I trust?"

"Why, yes, he passed last evening at our house hearing me repeat my lines."

"Pray, give him my compliments," said La Peyrade, bowing his visitors out.

Olympe Cardinal left the room first, as she had come in, leaving her mother, who could not easily keep up with her, some twenty feet behind.

"Well, well!" said La Peyrade to Thuillier, as he returned, "what do you say to Monsieur Minard, one of the aspirants to Céleste's hand? he takes his postponements patiently!"

"We aren't in to anybody!" cried Thuillier to the office-boy, as he closed the door and turned the key in the lock. "Now, my dear fellow," he added, addressing La Peyrade, "we are going to have a talk.—My dear fellow," said Thuillier, making a satirical beginning,—he had heard that nothing was so well adapted to floor an opponent—"I have learned something you'll be pleased to hear; I know now why *my* pamphlet was seized."

And he gazed sternly at La Peyrade.

"*Parbleu!*" said that gentleman in the most natural tone, "it was seized because they were determined to seize it. They looked in it for what messieurs the law advisers of the king call *subversive doctrines,* and they found them there, as they always do when they choose."

"No, you're mistaken there," replied Thuillier;

"the seizure was planned, concerted, concocted beforehand."

"By whom?" inquired La Peyrade.

"By those who wanted to destroy the pamphlet and the miserable wretches who agreed to sell it to them."

"In any event those who bought didn't make a remarkable bargain," retorted La Peyrade; "for even with the advantage of persecution I don't see that your work makes much of a sensation."

"But how about those who sold it?" said Thuillier with redoubled irony.

"Those who sold were the cleverer," replied La Peyrade.

"Oh! I know that you make a great talk about cleverness," said Thuillier; "but allow me to remind you that the police, whose hand I can see clearly enough in all this, aren't commonly supposed to throw their money out o' window."

And he glared at La Peyrade anew.

"So you have discovered," rejoined the advocate without wincing, "that the police bargained to stifle your pamphlet before it appeared?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, and I even know positively the sum paid to the person who undertook that honorable mission."

"It's quite possible that I too know the person," said La Peyrade, after a moment's reflection; "but I know nothing whatever about the amount."

"Well, I can tell you what it was; twenty-five thousand francs," said Thuillier with eager emphasis, "is what was paid the Judas."

"Pardon me, my dear fellow, but twenty-five thousand francs is a good deal of money. I don't deny that you're a man of consequence; but you're not such a scarecrow to the government as to induce them to make such sacrifices as that. Twenty-five thousand francs is about what they'd give to suppress one of the famous pamphlets aimed at the administration of the civil list; but our financial lucubration hadn't that importance, and such a sum, taken from the secret service fund solely for the pleasure of playing a trick on you, sounds to me rather like a fairy story."

"It seems," retorted Thuillier sourly, "that the honest go-between had some interest in exaggerating my importance; this much is certain, that the gentleman in question had a debt of twenty-five thousand francs that embarrassed him a good deal, and some little time before the seizure, that same gentleman found himself in a condition to get clear of it; unless you can tell me where he got the money, it seems to me that you can easily draw your own conclusions."

It was now La Peyrade's turn to gaze fixedly at Thuillier.

"Monsieur Thuillier," said he, raising his voice, "would you do me the favor to have done with generalities and riddles and give me the person's name?"

"Well, no," said Thuillier bringing his hand down on the table. "I won't call him by name because of the sentiments of esteem and affection which once

united us; but you understand me, Monsieur de la Peyrade!"

"Indeed," said the Provençal, his voice trembling with emotion, "I ought to have known that if I let a serpent in here, it wouldn't be long before I should be befouled with his venom.—Poor fool, not to see that you are simply echoing Cérizet's slanders!"

"This has nothing to do with Cérizet, who, on the other hand, has spoken very highly of you to me; but tell me this: how was it that, when you hadn't a sou the day before—and I had good reason to know it—you found yourself the next day in a position to pay Dutocq the round sum of twenty-five thousand francs?"

La Peyrade reflected a moment.

"No," he said, "Dutocq didn't tell you; he's not the man to make an enemy of a man of my size unless he can make something handsome out of it. Cérizet is the infamous tale-bearer—Cérizet, from whose hands I snatched your house on Boulevard de la Madeleine; Cérizet whom I magnanimously hunted up on his dung-heap to offer him an honorable position; the miserable villain whom an act of kindness only encourages to renewed treachery. Look you! if I should tell you what that man really is, your soul would rise in disgust; he has discovered new worlds on the sphere of infamy—"

This time Thuillier had an apt retort ready.

"I don't know what Cérizet may be," said he; "I know him only through you, and you introduced him to me as a manager on whom we could surely

depend in every respect; but, even if he's blacker than the devil, supposing that I got my information from him, all that, my boy, wouldn't make you any the whiter."

"Of course," said La Peyrade, "I did wrong to introduce him to you, but we needed a man who was familiar with the newspaper business, and he was valuable to us in that respect. Can one ever get to the bottom of such characters as his? I thought he had reformed. A manager, after all, I said to myself, is a mass of flesh and blood imprisoned, a signature machine. I thought I should find in him the stuff of a man of straw at least; I was mistaken, he'll never be anything but a man of mud."

"All this is very fine," said Thuillier, "but where did you get the twenty-five thousand francs that came into your possession so opportunely? That's what you always forget to explain."

"For God's sake, have a little common sense," replied La Peyrade: "a man of my talent with my hand in the police cashbox, and yet so poor that I couldn't throw in the face of your harpy sister the ten thousand francs she called me to account for with the insolence you yourself were witness to!"

"But," persisted Thuillier, "if you came honestly by that money—and I ask nothing better than to believe it—what hinders you from telling me about it?"

"I can't," replied the advocate; "the origin of that money is a secret confided to me as an advocate."

"Nonsense, you have told me yourself that the

statutes of your order forbid you meddling with business."

"Suppose I have done something not absolutely regular," said La Peyrade, "it would be strange if you should have the cheek to reproach me with it, after what I've risked for you —"

"My poor friend, you try to lead the dogs astray, but can't throw me off the scent. You choose to keep your secret, so keep it, I control my own confidence and esteem, so I'll just pay you the forfeit stipulated in our agreement and take the paper into my own hands."

"So you turn me out!" cried La Peyrade. "The money you've put into the thing, your hopes of being elected deputy, everything sacrificed at a hint from a Cérizet!"

"In the first place," replied Thuillier, "so far as the editorship is concerned we shall find some one to take your place, my dear fellow! Somebody said a long while ago, that no man is indispensable. As to my election, better never succeed than owe success to the help of a man who—"

"Go on!" said Théodose, seeing that Thuillier hesitated, "or rather be silent, for in a moment you'll blush for your suspicions and beg my pardon on your knees."

The Provençal realized that unless he made up his mind to make a clean breast of it, the influence and the future prospects that he had got once more within his grasp would infallibly slip out of his hands.

"You will remember, my dear fellow," he continued in a solemn tone, "that you have treated me without pity, and that by subjecting me to a sort of moral torture you have made it necessary for me to reveal a secret which is not mine."

"Go ahead!" was Thuillier's reply, "I'll take the responsibility; just let me see where I am in this labyrinth, and I'll be the first to admit that I'm wrong."

"Very good," said La Peyrade; "that twenty-five thousand francs was the savings of a maid-servant, who came to me and begged me to take it and pay her interest on it."

"A maid-servant who has saved twenty-five thousand francs! get out! she must work for a good family—"

"On the contrary, she's housekeeper for an old and infirm scientific man, and it was for the very reason that it seemed extraordinary that she should have such an amount of money in her possession, that she insisted on placing it in my hands as a sort of trust."

"Faith, my friend," said Thuillier jocosely, "we were at a loss to know what to do about a fiction-feuilleton, but with you here I shouldn't be alarmed on that score. Well might one say: there's imagination for you!"

"How's that!" said La Peyrade hastily, "you don't believe me?"

"No, I don't believe you; twenty-five thousand francs saved up in the service of an old scholar!

why it's about as credible as the officer in *La Dame Blanche* buying a château out of his savings!"

"But suppose I prove the truth of what I say, suppose I let you put your finger on it?"

"In that case, like Saint Thomas, I'll strike my flag in face of the evidence; but you'll excuse me if I wait until you've proved it, my noble friend."

Thuillier considered his attitude superb.

"I'd give two louis," he said to himself, "if Brigitte was here to see how I deal with him."

"Come," said La Peyrade, "suppose that, without leaving the office, and by means of a letter written under your eyes, I bring here the person from whom I had the money, and she confirms what I say, then will you believe me?"

This proposition and the assurance with which it was made did not fail to take Thuillier by surprise.

"Then we'll see," he replied, changing his tone. "But will you do the thing to-day on the spot?"

"Without leaving the room I told you; that's clear enough, it seems to me."

"And who'll take the note you're going to write?"

Thuillier thought that by thus emphasizing every detail, he was exhibiting overwhelming perspicacity.

"Who will carry the note?" replied La Peyrade; "*parbleu!* your office-boy, and you can give it to him yourself."

"Very well, write it," said Thuillier, deciding to drive his man to his last entrenchments.

La Peyrade took a sheet of paper with the printed heading, and read aloud as he wrote:

"Madame Lambert is requested to come at once, on urgent business, to the office of the *Echo de la Bievre*, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, whither the bearer of this note will escort her. Her coming is impatiently awaited by her devoted servant,

"THEODOSE DE LA PEYRADE."

"Look, is that all right?" said the advocate, passing the letter to Thuillier.

"Perfectly," said Thuillier, taking the precaution to fold the letter himself, and seal it. "Now, address it," he added.

And the letter returned to La Peyrade's hands.

Thuillier rang for Coffinet.

"Carry this note to its address," said he, "and bring the person back with you.—But will she be there?" he asked on reflection.

"It's more than likely," La Peyrade replied; "in any event neither you nor I will go away from here until she comes; the light must be let in on this business."

"Go!" said Thuillier to the messenger, assuming a theatrical air.

When they were alone, La Peyrade took up a paper and pretended to be absorbed in reading.

Thuillier, beginning to feel some uneasiness as to the end of the affair, regretted that he had not taken a step which did not occur to him until it was too late.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I ought to have torn up the letter, and not carried the experiment any farther."

With the wish to make a pretence at least of restoring La Peyrade to the position from which he had threatened to depose him, he said:

"By the way, I've just been to the printing-office; the new type has arrived and I think we can appear to-morrow."

La Peyrade made no reply, but rose and walked to the window to go on with his reading.

"He's sulking," said Thuillier to himself; "indeed, if he's innocent he has good reason to; but, after all, why did he bring that Cérizet here?"

To conceal his embarrassment and pre-occupation he sat down at the editor's table, took a printed letter-head and set about writing a letter.

La Peyrade soon returned to his seat, where he, too, seized a sheet of paper and made his pen travel across it with the feverish impatience indicative of deep emotion.

Thuillier tried to see out of the corner of his eye what the Provençal was writing, and noticed that he separated his paragraphs by figures on the middle of the line.

"Ah!" said he, "are you making a draft of a law?"

"Yes," replied La Peyrade dryly, "the law of the vanquished."

A moment later the messenger opened the office door and ushered in Madame Lambert, whom he had

found at home, and who came hurriedly in, somewhat alarmed.

"You are Madame Lambert?" said Thuillier with a magisterial air.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the devotee apprehensively.

Having requested her to be seated, and noticing that the messenger was still standing by, as if awaiting orders:

"That will do," Thuillier said to him; "go! and admit no one."

*

Thuillier's gravity and commanding tone served only to increase Madame Lambert's emotion. She had supposed that she had to do with La Peyrade alone, and she found herself confronted by a stranger with a haughty air, while the advocate, who had contented himself with bowing to her, did not utter a word; more than that the scene was taking place in a newspaper office, and everyone knows that, for devotees in particular, everything connected with the press has an infernal, diabolical flavor.

"Well, my dear fellow," said Thuillier to the advocate, "I don't see why you shouldn't now explain to madame why you sent for her."

In order to leave no room for suspicion in Thuillier's mind, La Peyrade thought it best to attack the question boldly and without preparation.

"We wanted to ask you, madame," he said, *ex abrupto*, "if it isn't true that you put in my hands about two months and a half ago the sum of twenty-five thousand francs, on which I was to pay you interest?"

Although she felt Thuillier's eyes and the Provençal's upon her, Madame Lambert, when this question was discharged at her point-blank, could not repress a start.

"Jesus, my God!" she cried, "twenty-five thousand francs! pray, where could I have got such a sum as that?"

La Peyrade's face did not betray his disappointment as one would have supposed it must. Thuillier looked at him with an expression of grieved sympathy.

"You see my dear fellow,—" he began.

"So you are very sure, are you, madame," continued the Provençal, "that you did not place twenty-five thousand francs in my hands? do you insist upon it? do you say that that is so?"

"Why, monsieur, did you ever know twenty-five thousand francs and a poor woman like me to go through the same door? The little I had has gone, as every one knows, in taking care of the poor, dear gentleman whose servant I have been for more than twenty years."

"That seems to me a categorical answer," said Thuillier, consequentially. La Peyrade did not exhibit the slightest trace of emotion; on the contrary, he seemed to be playing Thuillier's game.

"You hear, my dear fellow," he said, "and at need I will call on you to bear witness for me that madame never had twenty-five thousand francs, and consequently did not hand me that sum; and as Dupuis the notary, in whose hands I imagined that I had placed them in her name, started for Brussels this morning, carrying off all his client's funds, I have no account to settle with madame, and the flight of Dupuis the notary—"

"Dupuis the notary has run away!" cried Madame Lambert, startled by the alarming news out of her habitual affectation of Christian meekness and resignation; "ah! there's a miserable hound! why this very morning he was 'eating the Good Lord' "—taking the Sacrament—"at Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas!"

"Praying for a pleasant journey, no doubt," rejoined La Peyrade.

"Monsieur speaks very flippantly about it," continued Madame Lambert, "but that brigand has carried off my savings all the same; and, as a matter of fact, I did give them to monsieur, and monsieur is responsible to me for them; I don't know anyone but him."

"Well!" said La Peyrade to Thuillier, pointing to Madame Lambert, in whose whole appearance there was a suggestion of the she-wolf whose cubs have been stolen, "is this natural? Do you think madame and I are playing a comedy for you?"

"I am abashed at that Cérizet's audacity," replied Thuillier, "abashed at my own idiocy; I can do nothing but throw myself on your mercy."

"Madame," then said La Peyrade gaily, without seeing that with this quotation he put his finger in his own eye, *"pray lay aside your mortal terror;* Dupuis continues to be a holy man, and he is incapable of defrauding his clients; your money is still safe with him. As to monsieur here, to whom I had occasion to prove that you did actually hand me that money, he is another myself, and, though

known to him, your secret is still known to me only."

"All right, monsieur," said Madame Lambert; "then you gentlemen want nothing more of me?"

"No, dear madame, and be good enough to forgive me for the little fright I was compelled to give you."

Madame Lambert took her leave with every appearance of the most respectful humility; but, when she reached the door, she returned and said to La Peyrade, in a tone of the most honeyed sweetness:

"When does monsieur think he will be able to return my money?"

"Why, I told you," replied La Peyrade sharply, "that notaries don't return at a moment's notice the money they invest."

"Does monsieur think that, if I should go myself to Monsieur Dupuis to ask him when it would be convenient?—"

"I think," replied the advocate, hastily, "that if you go to him, you will do something that is perfectly absurd; he received the money from me, in my name, as you desired, and knows nobody but me."

"In that case, you will think about returning the small sum, which is nothing to you, won't you, monsieur? I won't press you, monsieur, just now; but in two or three months I may have a use for the money; something has been said to me about a little property that might suit me."

"Very well, Madame Lambert," rejoined La Peyrade, with difficulty restraining his irritation; "what

you wish shall be done, and I hope your money may be returned in a shorter time than you expect."

"This doesn't annoy monsieur?" said the woman; "he always told me that the first indiscretion I was guilty of—"

"Yes, yes, it is all right," the Provençal interrupted her.

"I have the honor to be your very humble servant, gentlemen," said the devotee, taking her departure, this time for good.

"You see, my dear fellow," Théodose said to Thuillier as soon as they were alone, "what a mess I get into by having to humor your diseased mind: this debt was asleep in its chronic state, and now you've stirred it up to the acute stage!"

"I am in despair, my dear friend, over my insane credulity; but don't be alarmed about that woman's demands; we'll look after that, and even if we were to give you the amount in anticipation of your marriage-portion—"

"Meanwhile, my dear friend, we must on every account talk over our internal arrangements again; I've no desire to be called to account every morning, and just now, while we were waiting for that woman, I scratched off a little draft of an agreement, which we will discuss and sign, if you choose, before number one appears."

"Why, in our partnership articles," said Thuillier, "we have a charter, it seems to me—"

"Which, by paying a paltry forfeit of five thousand francs—provided for in Article 14—" Théodose

interrupted, "you can put in your pocket whenever you choose. No, thanks! We'll fix on something more positive."

At that moment Cérizet came in with a sprightly, triumphant air.

"I've got my money, my masters," said he, "and in an hour the deposit will be all perfected."

But he suddenly noticed that his intelligence was received with marked coldness.

"Hallo, what's the matter now?" he asked.

"The matter is," Thuillier replied, "that I don't have anything to do with two-faced slanderers; that we don't want you or your money; and that I request you not to honor these quarters with your presence any longer."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed Cérizet, "so Papa Thuillier has allowed himself to be taken in again!"

"Go, monsieur!" said Thuillier; "you are no longer employed here."

"Well, little one," said Cérizet to La Peyrade, "it seems that you've turned the worthy bourgeois up again. In fact, he didn't invent the art of printing and we've seen you at work. But never mind, —I think you make a great mistake not to go and see Du Portail, and I'm going to tell him—"

"Will you go, monsieur!" cried Thuillier in a threatening tone.

"After all, my dear sir," retorted the usurer, "I didn't hunt you up; people managed to live before you came, and they'll live after you're gone. Just

try not to pay the twenty-five thousand francs out of your pocket, for that'll have a bad look."

With that Cérizet replaced in his own pocket his wallet containing thirty-three thousand francs in bank notes, and, taking his hat from the table where he had placed it on entering, he carefully polished it with his sleeve and took his leave.

Thuillier had been induced by Cérizet's confidential communication to embark upon what proved to be the most disastrous of campaigns. Having become La Peyrade's humble servant he was obliged to accept all his conditions. Five hundred francs a month for the advocate's general oversight of the paper; his services as editor paid for separately on the basis of fifty francs a column, which was an enormous price considering the small size of the journal; an agreement to continue the paper for six months under penalty of paying a forfeit of fifteen thousand francs; the most absolute omnipotence to be allowed the editor-in-chief, who was to have exclusive sovereign power to insert, revise, reject any article, without even being required to give the reasons for his decision: such were the avowed stipulations of the contract executed in duplicate and *in good faith* between the parties.

But by the terms of a secret agreement, Thuillier became surety for the sum of twenty-five thousand francs for which La Peyrade was responsible to the devotee, *the said Sieur* La Peyrade, however, binding himself, in the event that he and Mademoiselle Céleste Colleville should be joined in matrimony

and the guaranty entered into by Thuillier should have been carried out by him before the marriage took place,—to consider the sum thus paid for him and on his account as paid in anticipation of the marriage-portion. In this way the crafty Provençal succeeded in circumventing the law which no longer allows a forfeit in respect of marriage contracts. For was not this sum of twenty-five thousand francs, which Thuillier was not certain to recover unless the marriage, still only projected, should come to pass—was it not, I say, a genuine forfeit?

Matters being thus arranged and acceded to by the candidate, who could see no hope of success apart from La Peyrade, Thuillier had a happy inspiration: he went to the Cirque-Olympique to look up a retired clerk of his old bureau whom he had recognized taking tickets,—one Fleury,—and proposed to him that he should take the place of manager. Being an old soldier, a good pistol-shot, and a skilful fencer, this Fleury promised to be an excellent respect-compeller for the paper. Nor was he less adroit in the matter of *holding off his creditors*, and it was he who first, in the Treasury Department, conceived the ingenious scheme of putting supposititious attachments on his salary, so as to defeat such *bona fide* attachments as might be attempted. The same process was employed to preserve from attack the thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three francs thirty-three centimes, which by the terms of the law he was required to deposit in his own name. The journal being thus definitely

established, save for the addition of one or two associate editors who were to be picked up later and whom La Peyrade, thanks to his facility with the pen, could do without for the moment, the first number was put forth.

Once more Thuillier began the tour of exploration through Paris, which we have seen him undertake at the time of the publication of his pamphlet. Entering reading-rooms and cafés he would ask for the *Écho de la Bièvre*, and when, as was unhappily too often the case, the reply was that they knew no such paper, he would cry:

"It's incredible that a self-respecting house shouldn't take in a sheet of such wide circulation!"

And with that he would stalk disdainfully forth, not noticing that in many places, where the people understood this traveling-salesman business, they paid no further attention to him than to laugh in his face.

On the evening of the day when the inaugural article appeared, Brigitte had a great crowd in her salon although it was not Sunday. Reconciled to La Peyrade, whom her brother had brought home to dinner, the old maid declared that, flattery aside, his first article seemed to her tremendously well *hit off*. Indeed, according to all those who were present, the public was delighted with the first number, which had appeared that morning.

The public,—everyone knows what that means: for every man who launches a written word on the world, the public consists of five or six intimate

friends who do not know how they can avoid making the acquaintance of his lucubrations without getting into trouble with the author.

"For my part," cried Colleville, "I can say that it's the first political article I ever read that didn't put me to sleep."

"It is certain," said Phellion, "that the article seemed to me instinct with a vigor combined with a pithy style which one ordinarily seeks in vain in the editorial columns of the public prints."

"Yes," said Dutocq, "it's very well presented; and then there's a way of turning a sentence, you know, that every man can't get. But we must see how it stands the test. I fancy the *Echo de la Bièvre* will be bitterly attacked by the other papers tomorrow."

"*Parbleu!*" said Thuillier, "that's just what we want, and if the government would do us the favor of seizing us—"

"Thanks, my worthy patron!" said Fleury, whom Thuillier had also brought with him to dinner, "I prefer not to enter on the discharge of my duties quite so quickly."

"Oh! seized—" said Dutocq· "you won't be seized; but I guess the ministerial journals will discharge a fine broadside at you."

The next morning Thuillier was at the office at eight o'clock in order to be the first to receive this formidable volley. Having looked through all the papers he found that there was no more mention of the *Echo de la Bièvre* than if it did not exist.

When La Peyrade arrived he found his unfortunate friend in dismay.

"So that surprises you!" said the Provençal coolly; "I let you go ahead last night with your anticipations of a hot encounter with the press; but I knew perfectly well that there wouldn't be a word about us this morning. Don't you know that, against every paper that starts in with some promise of success, there's always a *conspiracy of silence* for a fortnight, and sometimes for whole months?"

"A conspiracy of silence!" echoed Thuillier admiringly.

He had no idea what it meant, but in the simple expression there was a flavor of grandeur, something that appealed to the imagination. When La Peyrade explained to him that by the conspiracy of silence was to be understood a determination on the part of existing newspapers to remain absolutely mute on the subject of new-comers in the field, in order to avoid furnishing them with a gratuitous advertisement by discussing them, his mind was hardly more completely satisfied than it was in the first instance by the swelling roundness of the phrase. So is the bourgeois constituted; the phrase is coin which always passes current with him without protest. At a phrase he becomes excited or depressed, waxes wroth or applauds. With a phrase he can be led on to organize a revolution and overthrow the government of his choice.

But the newspaper was only the means; the end was Thuillier's candidacy; it was hinted at rather

than declared in the early numbers; but one morning a letter appeared in the columns of the *Écho,* signed by several electors, thanking their representative in the General Council for the firm and frankly liberal attitude he had maintained in looking after the interests of the commune. "This firmness had subjected him to the persecution of a government which, suffering itself to be dragged along in the tow of foreign countries, had abandoned Poland and sold itself to England; the arrondissement needed, to represent it in the Chamber, a man of tried convictions, who, holding firmly aloft the banner of dynastic opposition, would, by his significant name alone, teach a stern lesson to the powers that be."

Accompanied by an adroit comment by La Peyrade, this letter was signed by Barbet and Métivier, —both tenants of the house on Rue Saint-Dominique, and the latter of whom furnished the paper on which the journal was printed,—and by almost all Brigitte's tradesmen, whom, with the election in view, she had continued to patronize since her emigration; Thuillier's physician, druggist and architect, and lastly Barniol, Phellion's son-in-law, who professed very advanced opinions, had also put their names at the foot of this letter.

As to Phellion himself, he considered the terms of the letter too uncompromising, and being always without fear as without reproach, although he might well have thought that his refusal would injure his

son's amatory interests, he had courageously withheld his name.

This experiment had the happiest results; the ten or twelve names thus put forward were taken to express the general desire of the electors, and were spoken of as "the voice of the quarter;" first of all, Thuillier's candidacy received such an impetus that Minard hesitated to come forward as an opposing candidate.

Delighted at the turn affairs had taken, Brigitte was the first to say that the question of the marriage must be taken hold of, and Thuillier was the more inclined to agree with her because he feared from moment to moment that he might be called upon to pay the sum for which he had become surety. The Provençal had a thorough explanation with the old maid. She did not conceal from him the apprehensions she had conceived relative to the maintenance of her sovereign authority, when a son-in-law of his talents and character should be established in the house. "If we are going to run counter to each other," said she, "it's much better to live apart from the first; we shan't be any worse friends for that."

La Peyrade replied that he would not for anything in the world agree to such an arrangement as she proposed; on the other hand, he reckoned among the happiest omens of his future the sense of security he should enjoy respecting the proper management of the material concerns of his household by reason of Brigitte's retaining the superintendence in her own hands. He should have enough to do with

looking after outside matters, and he did not understand how anyone could suppose that he should think of interfering in the details of housekeeping for which he was utterly unfitted. In short he reassured and persuaded Brigitte so thoroughly that she urged him to take the necessary steps for the publication of the banns without delay, taking it upon herself to prepare Céleste for a speedy catastrophe, and agreeing to make her accept it without winking.

"My dear little girl," said she one morning to Céleste, "I take it you have given up the idea of becoming Félix Phellion's wife. In the first place, he's more of an atheist than ever, and, more than that, you've noticed yourself that his head's getting twisted. You must have seen that Madame Marmus at Madame Minard's—she married a scientific man, an officer of the Legion of Honor, and a member of the Institute too. There's no sadder woman in the world; her husband put her in lodgings behind the Luxembourg, on Rue Duguay-Trouin, near Rue Notre-Dame des Champs; the street isn't paved or lighted. When he goes out he don't know where he's going, and brings up at the Champ de Mars when he started for Faubourg Poissonière; he ain't even capable of giving his address to a cab-driver, and he's so absent-minded that he can't tell you whether it's before or after dinner. You can imagine how a woman must pass her time with people who always have their noses into telescopes to look at the stars!"

"But Félix isn't as absent-minded as all that," said Céleste.

"Of course not, because he's younger, but his absent-mindedness will grow on him with age, and so will his atheism; so we all agree that he ain't the husband for you, and your mother and father and Thuillier and myself, everybody in the house, in short, with any common sense, have decided that you must declare yourself in favor of La Peyrade, a man of the world who'll make his way, who has rendered us very great services, and who's going to make your godfather a deputy. We are inclined, on his account, to give you such a *dot* as we certainly wouldn't give you for anybody else. So, it's settled, the banns are going to be published, and to-day week we sign the contract. There'll be a big dinner for the relations and intimate friends, and then an evening party at which the papers will be signed, and your trousseau and wedding presents exhibited, and as I'm to run the thing, I promise you it will be done in good style, especially if you don't act like a child, and if you fall in with our plans like a good girl."

"But, Aunt Brigitte—" Céleste began timidly.

"There's no *but* nor *if*," retorted the old maid imperiously; "it's all arranged as I tell you, and unless, mademoiselle, you claim to know more than all your relations—"

"I will do whatever you choose, dear aunt," replied Céleste, who felt as if a thunder-cloud were about to burst over her head, and was not strong

enough to struggle against the iron will whose decree she had just heard.

She rushed at once to pour her grief into Madame Thuillier's bosom, and when her godmother counseled patience and resignation, the poor child felt that she could not expect any support from that quarter, in even the slightest attempt at resistance, and she could but look upon her sacrifice as an accomplished fact.

Plunging with a sort of frenzy into the new current of activity she had introduced into her life, Brigitte at once took the field to prepare the trousseau and purchase the wedding gifts. Like misers who, on great occasions, lay aside their usual habits and character, the old maid could find nothing handsome enough and fairly threw money out of the window, so that, until the day appointed for signing the contract, the jeweler, the dressmaker, the linendraper, the milliner, the upholsterer, all selected from among the most famous houses, were permanently settled on Brigitte's premises.

"It's like a procession," said Joséphine the cook admiringly, to Madame Minard's Françoise; "the bell don't stop ringing from morning till night."

The dinner was ordered at Chabot and Potel's and not at Chevet's. Brigitte chose in this way to establish her independence and to follow no longer in the tracks of Madame de Godollo. The dinner-party was thus made up: three Thuilliers, three Collevilles, including the bride-elect; La Peyrade, the bridegroom; Dutocq, and Fleury, manager of the

Écho de la Bièvre, whom he had requested to serve as witnesses, the infinitesimally small number of his relations leaving him no alternative; Minard and Rabourdin, selected as witnesses on Céleste's behalf; Madame and Mademoiselle Minard and Minard junior; two of Thuillier's colleagues in the General Council; Dupuis the notary, who was employed to draw up the contract, and lastly Abbé Gondrin, spiritual adviser to Madame Thuillier and Céleste, who was to perform the marriage ceremony.

This last-named of the elect was a former vicar of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, whose extremely refined manners and talent as a preacher had led Monseigneur the Archbishop to translate him from the poor parish in which he began his career to the aristocratic sanctuary of La Madeleine. Since his two penitents had become his parishioners once more the young abbé sometimes visited them, and Thuillier, when he went to him and explained in his own way the propriety of his choice of La Peyrade, taking occasion to slander Félix Phellion's religious opinions, readily obtained his consent to contribute to the resignation of the victim with his unctuous and persuasive eloquence.

When they took their seats at the table three guests were missing: Minard the elder, his son and the notary Dupuis. The latter had sent Thuillier a note that morning to say that they need not expect him at dinner, but that he would be in the salon at precisely nine o'clock with the contract, and at Mademoiselle Thuillier's service. Julien Minard's

absence was explained by his mother, who said that he was confined to his room by a severe sore throat; but as to Minard the elder, who did not arrive with his wife and daughter, no explanation was forthcoming, and as the dinner-hour had passed, Madame Minard, all the while insisting that her husband would come, urged Brigitte to sit down without him. Brigitte ordered the soup to be kept hot, because, according to bourgeois ideas, a dinner without soup is no dinner at all.

The banquet was but moderately animated, and, although the viands may have been better, what a contrast, in the matter of gaiety and constant flow of jovial conversation, to the famous improvised feast at the time of the election to the General Council.

The absence of three invited guests was a prominent cause of the lack of animation; and then Flavie was melancholy, for she had seen La Peyrade again at her own house, and had a tear-bedewed explanation with him. Céleste, even if she had been happy in the choice that had been made for her, could not with propriety have exhibited her delight externally; so she made hardly any attempt to brighten up her countenance, and did not even dare to glance at her godmother, whose face, if we may so express it, looked as if she were indulging in one prolonged bleat; the poor child feared that an exchange of glances between them would bring tears to the eyes of both. Thuillier had grown in importance in a thousand directions, and was, in consequence, preternaturally solemn, and Brigitte,

feeling that she was no longer in her own circle, where she reigned without a rival, also seemed put out and embarrassed.

Colleville tried hard, by repeated jocose sallies, to raise the temperature of the assemblage, but the coarse salt of his artistic witticisms, produced the effect, in his present surroundings of a burst of laughter in a sick-room, and an unspoken hint, conveyed to him at the same moment by Thuillier, La Peyrade and his wife, to *hold himself back*, put a damper on his enthusiasm and his turbulent expansion of spirits. It was a remarkable circumstance that it was the most serious individual in the party who finally succeeded, with Rabourdin's assistance, in warming up the atmosphere. The Abbé Gondrin, a man of a most refined and cultivated mind, like all pure, well-ordered souls, possessed a fund of modest humor, which he could make contagious when he chose, and the conversation was just beginning to sparkle when Minard the elder appeared.

After apologizing for his tardiness, alleging an important matter of business at the mayor's office, which had to be concluded at one sitting, he exchanged a glance with his wife, which would have led one much more readily to believe that he had been employed upon some private business. La Peyrade and Thuillier had received a box for the first performance of the *Télégraphe d'Amour*, the famous fairy-play in which Olympe Cardinal was to make her début, and they were not fooled by Julien Minard's supposed indisposition. They too

looked at each other after noticing the significant look exchanged between the husband and wife, and they seemed to be asking each other if the secret had not been discovered, and if the worthy mayor of the eleventh arrondissement had not been detained till that hour by the necessity of investigating the vagaries of his son the advocate?

Being accustomed, wherever he was, to take the lead in conversation, and thinking doubtless that he would do well to conceal his paternal anxiety beneath an appearance of perfect freedom from care, Minard, after he had hastily swallowed a few morsels, said:

"Gentlemen, have you heard the great news?"

"What is it?" he was asked with much interest in several quarters.

"The Academy of Sciences at its session to-day was informed of a momentous discovery: we have a new star in the sky."

"Good!" said Colleville, "it will do to take the place of the one Béranger couldn't find there, when he bewailed the departure of Chateaubriand, to the tune of *Octavie:*

"'Chateaubriand, why fly thy native land?'"

This quotation, which was sung, exasperated Flavie, and if it had been customary for ladies to sit beside their husbands at table, the former first clarionet at the Opéra-Comique would not have been let off with a "*Colleville!*" in a threatening, imperative tone, addressed to him as a call to order.

"The fact that makes this great astronomical event particularly interesting to this party of which I have the honor to make one, is that the author of the discovery is a resident of the twelfth arrondissement where several of you still live or did live for a long while. Besides, everything connected with this great scientific fact borders on the marvelous. The Academy, after listening to the paper announcing the discovery, was so entirely convinced of its truth that, when the session was at an end, a deputation went to the modern Galileo's house to congratulate him in the name of the whole body, and yet the new star is not visible either to the naked eye or with the telescope; its existence and the place it occupies in the sky are demonstrated in the most irrefragable way by reasoning and computation. 'There *must* be an unknown star there; I don't see it, but I am sure of it.' That's what the astronomer said to the Academy, which body he convinced at once by his deductions; and who do you suppose this Christopher Columbus of the new celestial world is, gentlemen? an old man three-quarters blind, who can see just enough to find his way along the street."

"Wonderful! marvelous!" was heard on all sides.

"What's the man's name?" asked several voices.

"Monsieur Picot, or, if you prefer, Père Picot, for that's what everyone calls him on Rue du Val-de-Grâce, where he lives; he's simply an old professor of mathematics, who has turned out some very

promising pupils by the way: why, Félix Phellion, whom you all know, studied with him, and he was the man who read the paper to the Academy in his old master's name."

At the mention of Félix, Céleste, remembering his talk about a future in the sky, which she took at the time for an attack of madness, glanced at Madame Thuillier, whose face had lighted up, and who seemed to say to her: "Courage, my child! all is not lost."

"My dear fellow," said Thuillier to La Peyrade, "Félix is to be here this evening, and we must handle him very carefully in order to get him to let us have the paper; it would be a great hit for our *Echo*, if we could be the first to publish it."

"Ah!" said Minard, taking it upon himself to reply, "that would gratify the public curiosity, for the affair will make a great sensation. The deputation, not finding Monsieur Picot at home, went at once to the Minister of Public Instruction; the minister flew to the Tuileries, and the *Messager*, in an extra edition published this evening, which I read in my carriage as I drove here, announces that Monsieur Picot is made a knight of the Legion of Honor, and that a pension of eighteen hundred francs is assigned him from the fund set aside for the encouragement of science and letters."

"There's a Cross well placed at all events," said Thuillier.

"But a pension of eighteen hundred francs seems pretty mean to me," said Dutocq.

"True enough," said Thuillier, "especially as it's the taxpayers' money, after all, and when we see it squandered on anybody that's recommended by the *camarilla*—"

"Eighteen hundred francs is something, however," rejoined Minard, "especially for a scientific man. Those people have almost no wants and are used to living on very little."

"I fancy too," said La Peyrade, "that the excellent Monsieur Picot doesn't lead a very well-ordered life, for his family, who tried in the first place to have him put under guardianship, are at work at the present moment to secure the appointment of a commission of lunacy; they claim that he allows himself to be stripped by a woman who works for him. *Parbleu!* You know her, Thuillier; she's the woman who came to the office the other day, when somebody had made her believe that Dupuis the notary, in whose hands she had some money, had absconded and taken it with him."

"Yes, yes," said Thuillier in a meaning tone, "you're right, I know her."

"It's a strange thing," said Brigitte, seizing the opportunity to enforce once more the argument she had drawn a few days previously from the absent-mindedness of Marnus the academician; "it's a strange thing that all these scientific men, outside of their science, are good for nothing, and in their housekeeping you're obliged to lead them like children."

"That proves," said Abbé Gondrin, "how deeply

absorbed they are by their studies, and at the same time shows an innocent, unsuspicious nature which has a very touching side."

"When they ain't ugly as donkeys," rejoined Brigitte hastily. "I tell you, Monsieur l'Abbé, that a scholar wouldn't have suited me at all if I'd ever thought of marrying. In the first place what do they spend their time on? Nonsensical things most of the time; for here you are all staring in admiration because someone's discovered a star, but what good will any one of us get out of it? For all the good stars are, it seems to me we had enough already!"

"Bravo! Brigitte," exclaimed Colleville, breaking loose once more; "you're on the right track, my girl, and I agree with you that the man who should discover a new dish would deserve much better of mankind."

"Colleville," said Flavie, "I must tell you that your eccentricities are in the worst form."

"My dear mademoiselle," said Abbé Gondrin, addressing Brigitte, "you might be right, if we were made of matter only and if there were not, joined to our bodies, a soul whose instincts and appetites also demand to be satisfied. Now I believe that this consciousness of the infinite which is in every one of us, and which we seek to satisfy, each in his own way, is wonderfully well served by the labors of the astronomers, who reveal to us day by day the new worlds which the hand of the Creator has planted in space. In your case this yearning

for the infinite has taken a different course; it looks nearer home, and your passionate desire for the welfare of all about you, your warm, fervent, devoted affection for your excellent brother, are likewise manifestations of those earnest aspirations in which there is nothing earthly, and which, as they seek to attain their purpose and their goal, never think of asking themselves: 'What good will this do?' or 'Of what use is that?' I can tell you, moreover, that the stars are not as useless as you persuade yourself that they are; without them navigators would be sorely puzzled to find their way, and they could not sail to far-off countries to bring home the vanilla to flavor the delicious cream of your manufacture which I am eating at this moment. And so, as Monsieur Colleville will see, there is more affinity between dishes and stars than he seemed to think; we must despise no one at all, neither astronomers nor good housekeepers—"

The abbé was interrupted by the noise of an animated altercation in the reception-room.

"I tell you that I will go in!" cried a voice.

"No, monsieur, you won't go in," replied the voice of the *male* domestic. "They're at dinner, I tell you, and people's houses aren't to be broken into this way."

Thuillier turned pale; since the seizure of the pamphlet he imagined a descent of the police in every unexpected visit.

Among Madame de Godollo's injunctions to Brigitte, one of those which had to be repeated most

frequently was this,—that she must never rise from the table at which she was presiding as mistress of the house, except to give the signal for leaving the room; but the present circumstances seemed to carry forgiveness with them.

"I'm going to see what the matter is," she said hastily to Thuillier, noticing his anxiety. "What's the trouble here?" she asked the servant as soon as she reached the scene of the disturbance.

"Why this gentleman insists on coming in and declares that you can't be at dinner at eight o'clock."

"Who are you, monsieur?" said Brigitte to an old man in extraordinary garb, with his eyes covered with a shade.

"Madame, I am neither a beggar nor a vagrant," the old man replied in a ringing voice. "My name is Picot, professor of mathematics."

"Rue du Val-de-Grâce?" inquired Brigitte.

"Yes, madame, number 9, next to the fruit stall."

"Come in, monsieur, come in, we shall be only too happy to see you," said Thuillier, who had rushed out to greet the scholar as soon as he found out who he was.

"He seems like *Mars in a calèche,*" said Colleville, twisting a proverb after the style of Léon de Lou.

"There, you rascal," said the astronomer, turning in the direction where he had first seen the servant, who retired when he found that everything was being amicably adjusted; "I told you I'd go in!"

*

Père Picot was a tall man with a harsh, angular countenance, over which unremitting study had spread a layer of unhealthy pallor; and in its more prominent features, despite the softening effect of a light wig with huge curls and of the pacific eye-shade already mentioned, there were decided indications of a contentious, quarrelsome disposition; in that respect, however, he had already furnished confirmatory proof even before he appeared in the dining-room where everyone rose to receive him.

His costume consisted of an enormous redingote, occupying a middle position between a surtout and a dressing-gown, and beneath it an ample waistcoat of iron-gray cloth, secured by two rows of buttons, *à la hussarde*, formed a sort of breastplate from the waistband to the throat; his trousers, although it was near the end of October, were of black lasting, and bore evidence of the length of time they had been in use by the lustreless appearance of a very evident patch standing out against two shiny expanses in the region of the knees, caused by the constant rubbing of daily wear; but, by daylight, the most striking feature in the old scientist's costume was the cloth shoes in which feet like a Patagonian's were imprisoned, and which, being compelled to conform to the mountainous undulations of a number of gigantic corns, made one think

instinctively of the back of a dromedary, or a very advanced case of elephantiasis.

Once planted on the chair which was hastily placed for him, and when everybody had resumed their seats, the old man shouted in a voice of thunder amid the silence born of curiosity:

"Where is the good-for-naught, the sneak? Let him show himself, let him dare to raise his voice!"

"Whom are you talking about, my dear sir?" inquired Thuillier in a conciliatory tone in which it was possible to detect a patronizing inflection.

"A rascal whom I failed to find at his home, monsieur, and who, I was told, was here. Am I not in the apartments of Monsieur Thuillier, member of the General Council, on Place de la Madeleine, first floor, above the entresol?"

"You are, monsieur," replied Thuillier, "and I may add that you are surrounded here by universal respect and sympathy."

"And you will doubtless permit the mayor of the arrondissement adjoining that in which you live," said Minard, "to congratulate himself upon his good fortune in standing in the presence of Monsieur Picot, the same, no doubt, who has immortalized his name by the discovery of a star?"

"Yes, monsieur," replied the professor raising the stentorian diapason of his voice still higher, "I am Picot—Népomucène—, the man to whom you refer; but I haven't discovered any star, I don't bother with such stuff, for my eyes are tired out, and it's all a joke that the insolent rascal I came

here to find has tried to play on me; he skulks in a corner, the coward, and doesn't dare open his mouth before me!"

"Who is this man against whom you have such a grudge?" several voices asked the redoubtable old fellow, in the same breath.

"An unnatural pupil," replied the mathematician, "a bad fellow, with plenty of talent by the way, named Félix Phellion."

This name was greeted with the utmost amazement as may be imagined. Colleville and La Peyrade, deeming the situation very amusing, roared with laughter.

"You laugh, you villain!" cried the peppery old man, jumping to his feet; "just come and laugh at the end of my arm!"

And, waving an enormous bamboo with a porcelain knob, which he used to guide his steps, he came within an ace of knocking a branched candlestick that stood on the table, over on Madame Minard's head.

"You are mistaken, monsieur," said Brigitte running to his side and seizing his arm, "Monsieur Félix Phellion ain't here. It's likely he will be here soon to attend a party we are giving, but he ain't come yet."

"Your parties don't begin very early!" said the old man; "it's after eight o'clock. However, as Monsieur Félix is expected, perhaps you'll allow me to wait for him; you were dining, I believe; don't let me disturb you."

And he tranquilly resumed his seat.

"Since we have your permission, monsieur," said Brigitte, "we will go on, or, I might better say, finish, for we were eating our dessert. May I offer you something—a glass of champagne and a biscuit?"

"I'm obliged to you, madame," the old man replied. "I never yet refused champagne, and I'm very glad to take something between my meals; but you dine very late."

A place was made at the table between Colleville and Mademoiselle Minard, and, a plate of cake having been placed before his new neighbor, the musician undertook to keep his glass filled.

"Monsieur," said La Peyrade in a coaxing tone, "we are all greatly surprised that you have any reason to complain of Monsieur Félix Phellion, who is such a mild and inoffensive young man! Pray what has he done to you to make you so angry with him?"

With his mouth full of pastry which he was absorbing in such quantities that Brigitte's apprehensions were aroused, the professor made a sign indicating that he was about to reply, and after mistaking Colleville's glass for his own and emptying it, he said:

"What has the insolent villain done to me! Why he's played tricks on me that ought to hang him, for this isn't the first one I've had to reproach him with. He knows that I can't endure stars, for I've had to pay dearly for ever touching 'em. In 1807,

being employed in the Bureau of Longitude, I went on the scientific expedition sent to Spain under the direction of my friend and brother Jean-Baptiste Biot, to determine the arc of the terrestrial meridian from Barcelona to the Balearic Isles. I was on the watch for a star, perhaps the very one my rascal of a pupil has just discovered by accident, when all of a sudden, war having broken out between France and Spain, the peasants seeing me perched upon Mount Galazzo with a telescope, imagined that I was making signals to the enemy. A crowd of lunatics smashed my instruments and talked about cutting me up too; it would have been all up with me if the captain of a man-of-war hadn't taken me prisoner and shut me up in the citadel of Belver, where I passed three years in the harshest kind of captivity. Since then, as you can understand, I've had a grudge against the whole planetary system; and yet, without knowing it, I was the first man to see the famous comet of 1811, but I wouldn't have said a word about it if Monsieur Flauguergues hadn't been fool enough to announce it. Like every one of my pupils Phellion knows my outspoken aversion to stars, and he knew perfectly well that the worst trick he could play me was to load one of 'em on my back. So the deputation that came to play the farce of congratulating me was very lucky not to find me at home, for my friends the academicians, even if they do belong to the Academy, would have passed a very uncomfortable quarter of an hour."

The whole party considered the old mathematician's strange monomania extremely amusing. La Peyrade alone, beginning to realize the part Félix had played in the matter, was inclined to be sorry that he had called forth this explanation.

"But, Monsieur Picot," said Minard, "if Félix Phellion is guilty of nothing more than giving you the credit of his discovery, I should say that you had considerable reason for satisfaction at the result of his ungracious proceeding, the Cross of the Legion of Honor, a pension, and the glory that will be attached to your name."

"The Cross and the pension I'll take," said the old man emptying his glass, which, to Brigitte's great alarm, he proceeded to bring down upon the table with sufficient force to break the stem. "The government has owed them to me twenty years, not for discovering stars, for I've always despised that business, but for my famous *Treatise on Differential Logarithms* which Kepler thought proper to call monologarithms, and which form a sequel to Napier's tables; for my *Postulatum* of Euclid, which I was the first to solve; but most of all for my *Theory of Perpetual Motion*, four volumes quarto, boards; Paris, 1825. So you see, monsieur, that to try to confer glory on me is like taking water to the river. I had so little need of Monsieur Phellion to give me standing in the scientific world that I kicked him out of my house in disgrace a long time ago."

"Is it possible that this isn't the first star that he

has dared to put off on you?" inquired Colleville jocosely.

"He has done worse than that!" cried the old man; "he has destroyed my reputation, dimmed my glory. My *Theory of Perpetual Motion,* the printing of which cost me a very distressing sum, when it ought to have been printed at the Royal Press, was to make my fortune and make me immortal. Well, that wretched Félix stopped it all. From time to time, pretending to be on intimate terms with my publisher, the young sycophant would say to me: 'Papa Picot, your book's selling very well: here are five hundred francs,' or 'here are fifty crowns,' or sometimes even a thousand francs, 'your publisher asked me to hand you.' That sort of thing went on for years, and the publisher, who was coward enough to enter into the conspiracy, would say to me when I went to his shop: 'Why, yes, the *boulotte* isn't going badly, and we shall soon see the end of the first edition.' So I pocketed the money without a suspicion, and said to myself: 'My book's appreciated, the idea is making its way little by little, and I may expect any day to have some great capitalist come to me and propose to make a practical application of my system of—"

"Of the *Absorption of Liquids?"* asked Colleville, who was kept busy filling the maniac's glass.

"No, monsieur, of *Perpetual Motion,* four volumes, quarto, in boards; Paris, 1825. But, no! days passed and no one appeared, so that, imagining that my publisher wasn't exerting himself as much as he

might, I tried to sell the second edition to another bookseller. Then, monsieur, the whole plot was disclosed, and I had to throw the serpent out of my house. In six years, nine copies in all had been sold; sleeping in fancied security, I had done nothing to introduce my book, which was supposed to float itself all alone, and thus it was that I was shamefully despoiled of the fruit of my labors, the victim of black jealousy and malice."

"But," said Minard, giving voice to the thought that was in the minds of all present, "should we not rather look upon it as an ingenious as well as delicate way of—"

"Of bestowing alms upon me, eh?" the old man interrupted with a roar which made Mademoiselle Minard jump up from her seat; "to humiliate me, to dishonor me, me, his former professor! am I an object of charity? Has Picot—Népomucène—, whose wife brought him a marriage-portion of a hundred thousand francs, ever begged from anyone? But to-day nobody is respected: a good man, as they call us, is robbed of his religion, his good faith, so that they can say afterward to the public: 'These old dotards are good for nothing, you see; we, the young generation, the moderns, young France, are weaning them.' Away with you, greenhorn! you, support me! Why the old dotards have more knowledge in their little fingers than you have in your whole brain, and you'll never be worth what they are, little schemers that you are! However, my mind's at rest anent my vengeance; this young

Phellion will inevitably come to a bad end; what he did to-day before the whole Academy, reading a paper in my name, is forgery pure and simple, and the law punishes that with the galleys."

"That's true," said Colleville, "forgery of a public star!"

Brigitte, who was trembling for her glasses, and whose nerves were kept in commotion by the old man's furious consumption of food, gave the signal for adjourning to the salon by rising from her chair; several times already she had heard the bell ring, announcing that some of the guests invited for the evening had arrived. They thereupon set about transplanting the old professor, and Colleville complacently offered him his arm.

"No, monsieur," said he, "permit me to remain where I am. I am not dressed for a party, and, besides, the bright light tires my eyes. Nor do I care to put myself on exhibition, and it's just as well that the scene which is to take place between my pupil and me should have only four eyes to witness it."

"Well, leave him here," said Brigitte to Colleville.

And no one insisted, the old man having unwittingly almost forfeited the consideration he enjoyed at first. But, before leaving him, the careful housekeeper took pains to leave nothing fragile within his reach.

"Shall I send you some coffee?" she asked, as a parting attention.

"I take coffee, madame," replied Père Picot, "and cognac too."

"God bless me! he takes everything," said Brigitte to the *male* domestic as she left the dining-room.

And she bade him keep his eye on the old fool.

When Brigitte returned to the salon she saw the Abbé Gondrin standing in the centre of a great circle composed of almost everybody in the room, and having herself drawn near, she heard him say:

"I thank Heaven for having bestowed this good fortune upon me. I never experienced such emotion as that with which the scene we have just witnessed has filled my heart, and there is nothing, not even the somewhat burlesque form of the disclosure,—which was certainly entirely sincere, for it was quite involuntary,—which does not tend to glorify the astounding generosity it revealed to us. Situated as I am by my profession in a position to know of many acts of charity, and a witness or intermediary of many kindly deeds, I declare that I have never in my life fallen in with a more ingenious or more touching instance of devotion; not to let the left hand know what the right hand gives is in itself equivalent to becoming a Christian, but to go so far as to deprive one's self of one's rightful renown, and lavish it upon another under such extraordinary circumstances, with the probability of being denied, misunderstood, spurned, is to apply the precepts of the Gospel in their broadest meaning; such a man is something more than a Sister of

Charity, he is the apostle of benevolence!—How I would like to know that noble-hearted young man and to press his hand!"

Céleste stood a few steps away from the priest with her arm passed through her godmother's. Listening intently to his every word, she pressed Madame Thuillier's arm more and more closely as he analyzed Félix's generous conduct, and whispered to her:

"You hear, godmother! you hear!"

To nullify the inevitable effect upon Céleste of this warm eulogy, Thuillier interposed.

"Unfortunately, Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, "this young man that you tell us such a *grand story* about, is not altogether unknown to you. I have had occasion to talk with you about him, and to regret that it wasn't allowable for us to carry out certain plans we might have formed concerning him, on account of the very dangerous independence he affects in his religious opinions."

"Ah! it's the same young man, is it?" said the abbé; "you surprise me beyond measure; and I must say that the identity of the two would never have occurred to me."

"Mon Dieu! Monsieur l'Abbé," said La Peyrade, taking up the ball, "you will see him in a moment, and by bringing him to book on certain questions, you will have no difficulty in measuring the extent of the ravages the pride of science may make upon the most lavishly endowed minds."

"I shall not see him," said the abbé, "for my

black robe would speedily find itself out of place amid the worldly splendor which is gradually filling the salon. But as I know, Monsieur de la Peyrade, that you are a man of sincere and pious convictions, and as you undoubtedly take quite as much interest in this young man's welfare as I myself can take, I will say to you as I take my leave: 'Be of good cheer; sooner or later, such noble souls will return to the fold, and though we have to wait a weary while for the return of these prodigal children, if I saw them at last treading the path that leads to God, I should not despair of His infinite clemency for them.'"

With that the abbé set about finding his hat, preparatory to leaving the salon.

Just as he thought he saw a chance to make his escape unnoticed, he was stopped by Minard.

"Monsieur," said the mayor of the eleventh, "permit me to grasp your hand and to congratulate you on the tolerant words that have just fallen from your mouth. Ah! if all priests were like you, what conquests religion would make! I have at this moment a cause of grief in my own family, as to which I have to determine upon the proper course to pursue, and I should be very happy to have your opinion thereon, and to receive the assistance of your enlightened judgment."

"When you please, Monsieur le Maire," replied the abbé; "Rue de la Madeleine, number 8, behind the Cité Berryer; after my mass, which I say at six o'clock, I am usually at home all the morning."

As soon as the abbé had gone, Minard took his wife aside.

"Well, it's all true," he said, "and the anonymous letter did not lead us astray: Monsieur Julien is keeping a former actress at Bobino's, and he feigned illness to-day in order to assist at her début at the Théâtre des Folies-Dramatiques. The concierge of the house where the hussy lives is on very bad terms with her mother, who is supposed to be an old fish hawker, and, for a crown of a hundred sous, she told me the whole story. When we go home to-night I shall have a serious talk with monsieur my son."

"My dear," said Madame Minard theatrically, "no violent measures, I implore you!"

"Look out," said Minard; "everybody can see us! As to measures, I haven't determined on any; I have just asked Abbé Gondrin to help me with his advice, because, you see, though we snap our fingers at the priests when everything goes smoothly, when adversity comes upon us—"

"But you take the thing very seriously, my dear; youth must have its fling."

"True," said Minard, "but there are things I can't overlook. When the son of a respectable family gets into the hands of such women, dishonor, ruin enters the household. You don't know, Zélie, what these stage women are! They're Laises and Phrynes of the most dangerous sort, and it's enough that a young man belongs to the bourgeoisie for them to take special delight in ruining him. They

claim that the money we merchants have is stolen money, that we are grocers and cheats, and they call emptying our pockets making us disgorge our plunder. What a pity it is that I don't know where to find Madame la Comtesse de Godollo, she was such an experienced woman of the world! She's the one I'd have liked to consult."

This conjugal aside was suddenly interrupted by a frightful hubbub. Darting into the dining-room whence a sound as of furniture overturned and crashing glassware seemed to proceed, Brigitte found Colleville engaged in adjusting his cravat and making sure that his coat, which was cruelly rumpled about the neck, bore no such serious marks of violence as a rent in the cloth.

"For heaven's sake what's the matter?" said Brigitte.

"Why, it's this old fool," said Colleville; "he's insane. I came out here to drink my coffee with him for company's sake; he took a little joke of mine unkindly, lost his head so far as to grab me by the collar, and overturned in the tussle two or three chairs and a tray of glasses Joséphine was bringing in; she couldn't get out of the way in time."

"Because you teased him," said Brigitte crossly; you couldn't stay in the salon instead of coming out here to *charge* him, as you call it. You think you're still in the orchestra of the Opéra-Comique!"

Having delivered herself of this sharp reprimand, and seeing that it was necessary to get rid of this

ferocious old fellow who threatened to deluge her establishment with fire and blood, Brigitte, with the air of a woman who has made up her mind, walked up to Père Picot, who was coolly burning eau-de-vie in his saucer.

"Monsieur," she cried with all the strength of her lungs, as if she were talking to a deaf man—it seemed to her that a blind man should be addressed in the same way—, "I have something to tell you you won't like: Monsieur and Madame Phellion have just come in, and they tell me Monsieur Félix isn't coming."

Making use of the fiction resorted to by Julien Minard, she added:

"He was taken this evening with a sore throat and hoarseness."

"Which he got from reading so much!" cried the old professor joyfully. "Well, it's justice!—Madame, where do you get your brandy?"

"Why, at my grocer's," replied Brigitte, dumfounded by the question.

"Well, madame, it's my duty to tell you this: in a house where they drink excellent champagne, which reminds me of that we used to get at the late Monsieur de Fontanes' table, the grand master of the University, it's shameful to have such eau-de-vie. I tell you, with the frankness I pride myself on in everything, that it's good for nothing but to wash horses' feet in; and if I hadn't thought of the expedient of burning it—"

"Why he's the very devil himself!" muttered

Brigitte; "not a word of apology for the damage he's done, and then to blackguard my brandy!—Monsieur," she continued, in the same high key as before, "as Monsieur Félix isn't coming don't you think your family may be uneasy at your long absence?"

"Family, madame, I have none, seeing that they want to put me under guardianship; but there's my companion, Madame Lambert, who probably is astonished that I'm not at home at this time of night, and I ask nothing better than to go back to her, for the later I am the more violent she'll be. But I confess that in this distant quarter I shall have some difficulty in finding my way."

"Well, then, you must take a cab."

"A cab to go, a cab to return—that would give my excellent relations the right to call me a spendthrift!"

"It happens that I have an important errand to be done in your quarter," said Brigitte, seeing plainly enough that she had got to make up her mind to a sacrifice, "and I'm going to send my concierge with a cabriolet, if you'd like to take that opportunity?"

"I accept, madame," said the old professor, rising; "and, in case of need, you could testify before my judges that you saw me show my stinginess by refusing to hire a cab."

"Henri," said Brigitte to her servant, "take monsieur down to Monsieur Pascal, the concierge; and tell him, when he goes to take the message I

gave him just now, to leave him at his door, and to take good care of him."

"Good care! good care!" repeated the old fellow, declining the servant's arm; "do you take me for a package, pray, madame, or a piece of cracked porcelain?"

When her man had at last reached the door, Brigitte yielded to the impulse to be a little short with him.

"What I say, monsieur, is for your good, and you will permit me to *observe* that your character don't seem to be very well put together."

"Good care!" repeated the old man; "why don't you know, madame, that that's the kind of talk they use to get a man put under guardianship? However, I won't repay with insults such generous hospitality as I have received, especially as I think I taught that fine gentleman who seemed inclined to make fun of me, to know his place."

"Go along! go along, old beast!" exclaimed Brigitte shutting the door behind him.

Before returning to the salon she was obliged to drink a large glass of water; the constraint she was forced to put upon herself in order to clear her skirts of that dangerous guest, had, to use her own expression, put her all about.

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The next morning Minard the elder sent in his name to Phellion in his study. The great citizen and his son Félix were at the time discussing a subject which seemed to impart great animation to their conversation.

"My dear Félix," cried the mayor of the eleventh, giving his hand with great warmth to the young professor, "you are the one who brings me here this morning; I come to offer you my congratulations!"

"What's the matter, pray?" demanded Phellion; "have the Thuilliers at last decided—"

"A fig for the Thuilliers!" the mayor interrupted. —"But," he added, with a glance at Félix, "is it possible that the sly dog has concealed even from you—"

"I do not think," said the great citizen, "that my son ever kept anything concealed from me."

"Then you do know of the sublime astronomical discovery he communicated to the Academy of Sciences yesterday?"

"Your kindly feeling for me, Monsieur le Maire," said Félix hastily, "has led you astray; I was the reader simply, not the author of the paper."

"Don't try to fool us!" said Minard; "the reader! the whole truth is known."

"But look," said Félix, handing Minard the

Constitutionnel, "here's the newspaper: not only does it announce that Monsieur Picot is the one who made the discovery, but it mentions the rewards the government has bestowed on him without a moment's loss of time."

"Félix is right," said Phellion; "the newspaper proves it, and I think that on this occasion the government has acted in a very proper manner."

"But, my dear major, I tell you again that the whole truth has come out, and your son appears in a more admirable light than ever. To give his old professor the credit of his discovery in order to attract the favorable notice of the authorities to him —why, in all antiquity I know of no such noble action."

"Félix," said his father, with some symptoms of emotion, "this ceaseless toil to which you have been devoting yourself for some time past, these constant visits to the Observatory—"

"No, no, father, Monsieur Minard has been misinformed."

"Misinformed!" echoed Minard, "when I have the whole story from Monsieur Picot himself!"

At this argument, put forth in such a way as to leave no possibility of doubt behind it, the whole truth burst upon Phellion's mind.

"Félix, my child!" he cried, rising to embrace his son.

But he was compelled to resume his seat; his legs refused to hold him, he turned pale, and that ordinarily impassive nature seemed on the point of

giving way beneath the weight of the happiness which had descended upon it.

"My God!" exclaimed Félix in dismay, "he is ill; ring, I beg you, Monsieur Minard!"

As he spoke he ran to the old man's side, quickly removed his cravat and shirt collar and chafed his hands. But it was only a passing weakness; recovering consciousness almost immediately Phellion drew his son to his heart, and holding him there in a long embrace, he repeated in a voice choked by the tears which came to the relief of his paroxysm of joy:

"Félix, my noble son, great in heart and great in mind!"

The peal Minard rang upon the bell was so emphatic and so authoritative that the whole household was instantly aroused.

"It's nothing, it's nothing," said Phellion, dismissing the servants.

But, as he saw his wife coming in at almost the same moment, he resumed his customary solemnity of bearing.

"Madame Phellion," said he, pointing to Félix, "how many years is it since you brought this young man into the world?"

Madame Phellion, paralyzed by this question, hesitated a moment, and finally replied:

"Twenty-five years next January."

"Do you not think," continued Phellion, "that God has thus far fully satisfied your maternal aspirations, by permitting the child of your womb

to be an honest man, a devoted son, and, furthermore, endowed with a remarkable aptitude for mathematics, the science of sciences?"

"To be sure," said Madame Phellion, understanding less and less what her husband was driving at.

"Well," continued Phellion, "you are indebted to Heaven for an addition to its blessings, for it has deigned to permit you to be the mother of a man of genius; the labors we have inveighed against, and which made us fear for our poor child's reason, were the road, the steep, rough road, that leads to glory."

"Come, come!" said Madame Phellion, "will you ever succeed yourself in finding the road that leads to making yourself understood?"

"Your son," said Minard, measuring out joy in more judicious doses this time, for fear of causing another case of intoxication from happiness, "has made an important discovery in astronomy."

"Really?" said Madame Phellion, going up to Félix, taking both his hands and looking lovingly into his face.

"When I say important," continued Minard, "I spare your maternal blushes: it is a sublime discovery, bewildering it may well be called. He is but twenty-five years of age, and his name henceforth is immortal."

"And this is the man," exclaimed Madame Phellion in a transport of joy, embracing Félix effusively, "to whom they prefer a La Peyrade!"

"They do not prefer him, madame," said Minard,

"for the Thuilliers are not that scheming fellow's dupes; but he forces himself upon them. Thuillier has made up his mind that without his aid he can't be elected to the Chamber,—where he hasn't arrived yet, by the way,—and he is sacrificing everything to that object."

"Why, it's a horrible thing," said Madame Phellion, "to put his ambition before the happiness of his children!"

"Ah!" said Minard, "Céleste isn't their child; she's only their adopted daughter."

"So far as Brigitte is concerned," rejoined Madame Phellion; "but how about *Beau* Thuillier?"

"My dear love," said Phellion, "no harsh words; the good Lord has sent us a mighty consolation; and indeed, this marriage may not take place after all, although it's well advanced, and although Félix's conduct in regard to it has not been marked by the philosophy that might be desired."

Noticing that Félix shook his head incredulously, Minard interposed.

"Why yes, the major's right; last night, at the signing of the contract, there was a hitch. You didn't come, to be sure; your absence was commented on."

"We were invited," said Phellion, "and up to the last moment we hesitated as to whether we would go; but, you see, we were in a false position; and then Félix—I can understand it now, as he had been reading something of his own to the Academy—was used up with excitement and fatigue. To have

appeared without him would have been awkward; that's why we acted like the wise man and decided to stay away."

The presence of the man he had just pronounced immortal did not prevent Minard, as soon as the opportunity was offered him, from grasping eagerly at one of the most highly-prized delights of bourgeois existence, namely: gossiping and the dissemination of news.

"You can't imagine," said he, "what a succession of extraordinary things, each stranger than the last, took place yesterday in the Thuillier household."

And thereupon he related at length the curious episode of Père Picot.

Then he spoke of Abbé Gondrin's enthusiastic approval of Félix's conduct, and of the young preacher's expressed desire to make his acquaintance.

"I'll go and see him," said Félix; "do you know where he lives?"

"Rue de la Madeleine, number 8," replied Minard; "I came from there a moment ago; I had a very delicate matter to talk over with him and his advice was as charitable as it was clear and judicious; but the great sensation of the evening was this: there was a large, fashionable party assembled to listen to the reading of the contract, and the notary, after keeping them all waiting more than an hour, ended by not coming at all."

"So the contract wasn't signed?" exclaimed Félix eagerly.

"Not even read, my friend; at last some one came to say that the notary had gone to Brussels."

"For a more important matter of course," said Phellion innocently.

"A matter of the utmost importance," rejoined Minard; "a trifling failure for five hundred thousand francs which this gentleman leaves behind him."

"But who is this public officer," said Phellion, "who proves so scandalously recreant to the sacred obligations of his profession?"

"*Parbleu!* your neighbor on Rue Saint-Jacques; Dupuis."

"What!" exclaimed Madame Phellion, "such a devout man, and churchwarden of the parish!"

"Why, madame," said Minard, "they're the very ones who ride post the best;—there are precedents."

"But," said Phellion, "such a piece of news as that thrown into the midst of a private party must have had the effect of a thunderbolt."

"Especially," said Minard, "as it arrived in the most unexpected and extraordinary way."

"Pray tell us about it," said Madame Phellion with renewed animation.

"It seems," continued Minard, "that this virtuous sharper had in his custody the savings of a great number of servants, and that Monsieur La Peyrade—for all these pious fellows are leagued together, you see!—undertook to beat up funds for him among that class of people."

"I always said it," Madame Phellion broke in; "that Provençal's a good-for-nothing."

"Notably," resumed the mayor, "he had caused to be entrusted to Monsieur Dupuis, to the credit of an old servant, also a pious fraud, a certain little sum, which was worth while, on my word! twenty-five thousand francs, if you please; this companion, one Madame Lambert—"

"Madame Lambert!"—it was Félix's turn to interrupt—"why, she's Monsieur Picot's companion; a pale, thin face, wears a scanty cap, keeps all her hair out of sight and always looks at the ground when she speaks?"

"That's the very woman," said Minard; "a true hypocrite's face."

"Twenty-five thousand francs laid by!" exclaimed Félix, "I don't wonder that poor Père Picot is always hard up."

"And that he neglects to interfere in the sale of his books," said Minard slyly. "However that may be, you can imagine that when she learned of the notary's flight, the woman was up in arms. Off she went to La Peyrade's rooms; at La Peyrade's she was told that he was dining and passing the evening at Thuillier's, whose address she didn't get very accurately, so that, after rushing about all the evening, about ten o'clock, when we had been standing there in the salon for an endless time, looking at the whites of one another's eyes, with no idea what to say or do, for neither Brigitte nor Thuillier have the tact to extricate themselves from

such a hole, and we had not, to while away the time of waiting, Madame de Godollo's voice or Madame Phellion's talent—"

"Oh! you are too polite, Monsieur le Maire," said Madame Phellion in a mincing tone.

"At last," continued Minard, "about ten o'clock, the Lambert woman arrived in the General Councillor's reception-room in a high state of excitement, and asked to speak with Monsieur l'Avocat."

"That was very natural," said Phellion; "as the person through whom she invested her money, the woman had the right to hold him responsible."

"You'll see how the Tartuffe acted!" said Minard. "He went out at once and returned with the news. As everybody asked nothing better than an excuse for leaving, there was a general exodus; then what does our man do? He returned to Madame Lambert, whom he had left in the reception-room, and as the good woman never stopped crying out that she was ruined, that she was undone,—which might have been her own idea, but might equally well have been a scene arranged with the other,—my gentleman, the editor-in-chief of the *Écho de la Bièvre* said to her solemnly in presence of the whole party whom the woman's outcries had detained: 'Calm yourself, my good woman; the investment was made with your sanction, and therefore I owe you nothing; but the fact that the money passed through my hands is sufficient to make my conscience tell me that I am responsible for it; if

you aren't paid when the notary's affairs are settled, I will pay you.'"

"Very good," said Phellion, "that's what I said a moment ago; the middle man must answer. I wouldn't have hesitated to do what Monsieur de la Peyrade did, and I don't think he can fairly be taxed with jesuitism on account of his conduct."

"Yes, you would have done it," said Minard, "and so would I; but we wouldn't have said it with a great flourish of trumpets, and we'd have paid out our own money like true gentlemen. But what will this electoral courtier pay with? with the marriage portion?"

At that moment the little servant entered and handed a letter to Félix Phellion. It was from Père Picot, written at his dictation by Madame Lambert; that is why we do not reproduce its orthography.

Madame Lambert's handwriting was of the sort that you do not forget when it has once come under your observation. Félix recognized it at once.

"It's a letter from the professor," said he. "Have I your permission, Monsieur le Maire?" he added, before breaking the seal.

"It ought to reconcile you," said Minard; "I never saw anything so comic as his anger last evening."

Félix smiled as he read the letter. When he had finished it, he passed it to his father.

"You can read it aloud," said he.

Thereupon the great citizen began in his solemn voice:

"MY DEAR FÉLIX.

"I have just received your note; it came just in time, for I was what they call very angry with you. You say that when you committed the abuse of confidence that I proposed to discuss somewhat roundly with you, your particular purpose was to hit my family a rap by proving that a man who could make such complicated calculations as your discovery required, was not a man to be put under guardianship or bothered to death with a commission of lunacy. That argument pleases me and affords a good enough answer to the infamous lawsuit for me to praise you for thinking of it. But you sell your argument to me a little dear by making me the crony and boon companion of a star, whose companionship doesn't suit me at all, as you know very well. A man of my years, who has solved the problem of *perpetual motion*, doesn't bother his head with such stuff; it will do for greenhorns and beginners like you; and that's just what I went to tell the Minister of Public Instruction this morning—who received me, by the way, with the greatest affability. I put it to him whether, after making a mistake as to the address, he ought not to take back the cross and the pension, although I had certainly earned them in other ways.

"'The government,' said the minister, 'is not in the habit of making mistakes; what it does is always well done, and an ordinance signed by his Majesty's hand isn't to be annulled; your meritorious work has earned the two distinctions the King confers on you, and it's a debt of long standing which I am glad to discharge in his name.'

"'But what about Félix?' said I; 'for, after all, this discovery isn't so bad, for a young man!'

"'Monsieur Felix Phellion,' the minister replied, 'will receive during the day his appointment as a knight of the Legion of Honor; I will myself see to it that the King signs the order this morning; moreover, there is at this moment a

vacancy in the Academy of Sciences, and if you don't make any claim—'

"'I, in the Academy!' I interrupted, with the outspokenness you are familiar with, 'I detest your academies,—they're extinguishers, assemblages of sluggards, shops with a huge sign and nothing to sell—'

"'Well, then,' said the minister with a smile, 'I think that Monsieur Felix Phellion has all the chances in his favor at the first election, and among those chances I include the influence of the government, which is certain to be accorded him, provided it is to be loyally and legitimately applied.'

"'That, my poor boy, is all I have been able to do to reward you for your good intentions and to prove to you that I bear you no malice. I believe, after all, that my relations are likely to find their noses a little too long. Come and talk it all over to-day, about four o'clock, for I don't dine the next day, as I saw them doing last night at a house where I had occasion to speak of your talents in rather high terms. Madame Lambert, who is better with a saucepan in her hand than a pen, will outdo herself, and, although it's a Friday, when she never has any mercy on me, she promises us an archbishop's fast-day dinner, with the slender half-bottle of champagne, which we will duplicate if need be, to water the ribbons.

"'Your old professor and friend,

"'PICOT.

"'Chevalier of the Legion of Honor.

"'P. S.—Suppose you should induce your excellent mother to let you have a small bottle of that fine old brandy you treated me to once on a time? I haven't a drop of it left and I drank some yesterday that would have done to wash horses' feet with; but I spoke my mind about it to the charming Hebe that poured it out for me.'"

"Certainly he shall have some of it," said Madame Phellion, "and not a small bottle either, but a litre."

"And I too," said Minard, "who pride myself on owning some that isn't too far gone with age, will send him a bottle or two; but you mustn't tell him where it comes from, Monsieur le Chevalier—by the way, I hope you'll allow me to be your sponsor —for one never knows how that strange man will take things."

"Wife," said the elder Phellion abruptly, "a white cravat and my black coat!"

"Where do you mean to go?" said Madame Phellion; "to the minister's, to thank him?"

"Bring me those articles of apparel, I say; I have an important visit to make, and I trust Monsieur le Maire will excuse me."

"I must be off, too," replied Minard, "for I have some business to attend to relating to my own son, who hasn't discovered a star."

Deaf to the questions put to him by his wife and Félix, Phellion completed his toilet, put on a pair of white gloves, sent for a cab, and, some fifteen minutes later, sent in his card to Brigitte, whom he found superintending the process of stowing away the gala porcelain and silver-plate which had done duty the preceding day.

Postponing this household duty to receive her visitor, the old maid began when they were seated:

"Well, Papa Phellion, you went back on us yesterday: however, you have a keener scent than the others. Do you know of the trick the notary played us?"

"I know everything," said Phellion, "and the

very delay imposed upon the execution of your plans by that unforeseen occurrence is the text of the momentous conversation I desire to have with you. Sometimes Providence seems to take pleasure in defeating our most skilfully devised plans; sometimes, too, by means of the obstacles it places in our way it seems to intend to show us that we are going wrong, and to urge us to reflect more carefully."

"Providence! Providence!" said Brigitte the strong-minded; "it has something better to do than bother its head about us."

"That's one way of looking at it," replied Phellion; "but, for my own part, I am accustomed to discern its decrees in small things as well as great, and certainly, if it had permitted your engagements with Monsieur de la Peyrade to pass the first stage of execution yesterday, you would not see me in your house at this moment."

"Then you think," said Brigitte, "that a marriage can't take place for lack of a notary? As they say, the convent doesn't stand still for lack of a monk."

"My dear mademoiselle," said the great citizen, "you will do my wife and me the justice to say that we have never tried to influence your decisions; we have allowed our young people to fall in love without any too clear an idea what the attachment might lead to—"

"To put fleas in their ears," Brigitte interrupted him; "that's what love does, and that's why I always steered clear of it."

"What you say," rejoined Phellion, "is particularly true as regards my unfortunate son; for, notwithstanding the noble pursuits in which he has sought distraction from his sorrow, he is so wretchedly unhappy under its weight to-day, that this morning, notwithstanding the great triumph he has achieved, he was talking to me about circumnavigating the globe, a whim which would have kept him away at least three years, even if he had escaped the perils of such a prolonged journey."

"Well," said Brigitte, "that might not have been such a bad idea; he'd have come back consoled, and with three or four more stars to his credit."

"This one is enough for us," said Phellion with twice his customary gravity, "and, relying upon the advantages accruing from this discovery, which has placed his name upon so lofty an eminence in the scientific world, I am simple enough to dare to say to you point-blank: 'I come, mademoiselle, to ask the hand of Mademoiselle Céleste Colleville for my son Félix Phellion, who loves her and is loved by her.'"

"But, little father, it's too late," replied Brigitte; "consider that we are *diametrically* bound to La Peyrade."

"It is never too late to do what is right, so they say, and yesterday it would have been too soon for me to venture to come forward. My son, confronted with the necessity of making up for the difference in their fortunes would not then have been able to reply: 'If Céleste, through your generosity,

has a dowry which mine is far from equaling, I have, nevertheless, the honor of being a member of the royal order of the Legion of Honor, and in a very short time, according to all appearances, I shall be a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, one of the five divisions of the Institute.' "

"Certainly Félix is coming to be a very pretty catch," said Brigitte, "but we've promised La Peyrade; he and Céleste are posted at the mayor's office; unless something out of the common turns up the contract will be executed; he's busy about Thuillier's campaign, which he has already got into very good shape; we have money tied up with him in a newspaper enterprise; so it's impossible to get out of our promise, even if we wanted to."

"So then," said Phellion, "in one of those rare cases in which reason and inclination are on the same side, you think it right to give the question of self-interest precedence over everything else? Céleste, we know, has no great liking for Monsieur de la Peyrade. Brought up with Félix—"

"Brought up with Félix!" exclaimed Brigitte; "at one time she might have chosen between Monsieur de la Peyrade and monsieur your son,—that's the way we force her inclination—and she wouldn't have Monsieur Félix, whose atheism is well known."

"You're mistaken, mademoiselle; my son is not an atheist, for Voltaire himself doubted if there were any atheists, and no longer ago than yesterday, in this very house, an ecclesiastic, as estimable

for his talent as for his virtues, eulogized Félix in the warmest terms, and expressed a desire to make his acquaintance."

"*Parbleu!* yes, to convert him," said Brigitte; "but as to the question of the marriage, I am very sorry to tell you that it will be like mustard after dinner; Thuillier will never abandon his La Peyrade."

"Mademoiselle," said Phellion, rising, "I feel no sort of humiliation on account of the useless step I have taken; I do not even ask you to keep it secret, for I shall be the first to speak of it to all our acquaintances and friends."

"Speak away, my good friend, to anyone you choose," retorted Brigitte tartly. "Just because your son has discovered a star, if he did really discover it and not the old fellow the government has pensioned for it, why we must let him marry one of the daughters of the King of the French, must we?"

"Let's stop there," said Phellion; "I might reply that, without crying down the Thuilliers, the Orléans family seems to me rather a lofty illustration. But I don't care to introduce harsh words into our conversation, and, begging you to receive the assurance of my humble respects, I withdraw."

With that he stalked majestically forth, leaving Brigitte smarting under the lash of his comparison, discharged *in extremis* after the style of the Parthians, and in a towering rage, all the more poignant because Madame Thuillier, the night before,

after all the guests had departed, had had the incredible audacity to say a word in Félix's favor. It goes without saying that the serf was unceremoniously snubbed, and requested to mind her own business. But this attempt at having a will of her own on her sister-in-law's part had put the old maid in a bad humor, and Phellion, by renewing the same subject, could not fail to arouse her ire. Joséphine the cook and the *male* domestic felt the effects of the scene we have described; Brigitte found that in her absence everything had been arranged all awry, and, *putting her shoulder to the wheel,* she climbed up on a chair, at the risk of breaking her neck, in order to reach the highest shelves of the closet where her holiday porcelain was carefully preserved under lock and key.

This day, which began so badly for Brigitte, was beyond question one of the most exciting and stormy of this narrative.

In order to describe it with the pen of an accurate historian, we must begin at six o'clock in the morning, when we shall find Madame Thuillier going to the Madeleine to hear the mass Abbé Gondrin was in the habit of saying at that hour, and thereafter approaching the holy table, a sacrament of which pious souls never fail to partake when they have to carry out some great resolve.

At eight o'clock we shall see Minard the elder calling upon the young vicar as he had received permission to do the night before, and depositing

his paternal grief in the bosom of the adroit and conciliatory casuist.

Abbé Gondrin gently reproved him for having established his son in one of those professions in which sloth, arrayed in a title that creates an illusion of a life of toil, may lead one on to all sorts of follies; advocates without briefs and doctors without patients, when they have not a sou, are the nursery in which the spirit of revolution and disorder finds recruits; when they are rich, on the contrary, they follow the example of the young aristocracy, who, of all their lost privileges, having retained only the right to the *far niente,* spend almost all the leisure moments of their useless, unoccupied existence on the training of race-horses and actresses.

In this particular case, the violent measures toward which the mayor of the eleventh arrondissement seemed to incline were veritable chimeras. There is no longer a Saint-Lazare for the accommodation of deranged youth, and Manon Lescauts are no longer kidnapped to be sent to America. Abbé Gondrin, therefore, was of the opinion that Minard should try to arrange matters by a sacrifice: the siren must be endowed and married off; the cause of good morals would in that way be advanced in two directions. The Abbé exhibited no eagerness to undertake to bring about this solution of the problem himself; he was too young for that sort of diplomacy, where scandal finds it so easy to glide in beside the thought of well-doing. As the girl had

a mother, Minard could see the woman and enter into negotiations with her.

About noon Abbé Gondrin received a visit from Madame Thuillier and Céleste. The poor child longed to hear something further in the line of the words whereby the priest's eloquent tongue had guaranteed Félix Phellion's salvation, in Brigitte's salon on the preceding evening. It seemed very strange to the young theologian that a man could receive pardon from divine justice without having ever been received into the bosom of the Church; for the anathema is explicit: "Without the pale of the church, no salvation."

"My dear child," said Abbé Gondrin, "try to reach a better understanding of that expression, which seems inexorable; it is rather a word of glorification for those who have the happiness of dwelling in the lap of our holy mother, the Church, than a malediction upon those who are so unfortunate as to be separated from her. God sees the bottom of men's hearts, and distinguishes his elect; and so vast is the treasure of his loving-kindness that to no mortal has it been given to measure its richness and munificence. Who then would dare to say to God, the Infinite: 'Thou shalt be generous and glorious thus far?' Jesus Christ pardoned the adulterous woman, and on the Cross he promised Heaven to the good thief, to prove to us that His wisdom and His mercy shall govern, and not the judgment pronounced by mankind. A man who deems himself a Christian may be none the less

an idolater in God's sight; and another is pointed at as a pagan, who is, by his sentiments and acts a Christian, though he knows it not. Our holy religion has this divine attribute, that every form of nobleness of heart, of grandeur, of heroism, is but the putting in practice of its precepts. As I said yesterday to Monsieur de la Peyrade, pure hearts are, sooner or later, inevitably won over to it; we have but to give them credit,—we invest our confidence at a high rate of interest, and, moreover, charity bids us do it."

"O my God!" cried Céleste, "to think that I have learned this so late when I had the opportunity to choose between Monsieur Félix Phellion and Monsieur de la Peyrade and did not dare to follow the dictates of my heart!—Monsieur l'Abbé, couldn't you speak to my mother? your words are so highly esteemed!"

"It's impossible, my child," replied the vicar; "if I had the direction of Madame Colleville's conscience I might try perhaps, but we are so often accused of improper interference in family matters! You may be sure that my intervention, being without authority or justification, would do more harm than good. It is for you and those who love you," he added with a glance at Madame Thuillier, "to see if the arrangements, which seem far advanced to be sure, can not be modified in a way to meet your wishes."

It was written that the poor child should drain to the very dregs the cup that she had prepared for herself by her intolerance: just as the abbé finished

his sentence his old servant came and asked him if he could receive Monsieur Félix Phellion. Thus, like the Charter of 1830, Madame de Godollo's officious falsehood was transformed into the truth.

"Go this way," said the vicar hastily, showing his two penitents out through a private entrance.

Life has such strange vicissitudes that, at times, the same expedient may be adopted by the man of God as by the courtesan.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Félix to the young vicar, as soon as they stood face to face, "I have heard of the kindly words in which you were good enough to refer to me last night in Monsieur Thuillier's salon, and I should have made haste to come and express my gratitude for them, even if another matter had not led me to consult you."

Abbé Gondrin passed rapidly over the exchange of compliments, in order to learn in what way he could be of service to him.

"With what I choose to believe was a charitable purpose," replied the young student, "something was said to you yesterday concerning the state of my soul. They who can read so confidently what is written there are better informed than I am as to my spiritual condition; for, during the last few days, I have felt the inspiration of unfamiliar, inexplicable impulses. I have never doubted the existence of God, but from close contact with the infinitude of space in which He has permitted my mind to follow the track of one of His works, it seems to me that I have acquired a less confused

and more personal notion of Him, and I have wondered if an upright and honorable life is the only homage His omnipotence is likely to expect from me. Nevertheless, innumerable objections spring up in my mind to the form of worship, whose minister you are, and while I am fully sensible of the beauty of its external forms, I find that my reason revolts against many of its ordinances and practices. I shall have paid dearly, perhaps with the happiness of my whole life, for my lukewarmness and delay in seeking to solve these doubts. I have decided to probe them to the bottom. No one is better able than you, Monsieur l'Abbé, to solve them for me. Therefore I come with confidence to submit them to you, to entreat you to listen to me, to answer my questions, and to tell me what books I should read in order to continue my search for light beyond the hours which you will deign to devote to personal interviews with me. The heart that makes this appeal to you is cruelly afflicted. Is it not therefore well prepared to receive the seed of your words?"

Abbé Gondrin declared that he would, notwithstanding his insufficiency, joyfully undertake to satisfy the scruples of the young advocate's conscience, and after requesting him to give him a place in his friendship, he urged him to read first of all, Pascal's *Pensées*. Pascal's mind and the young mathematician's seemed likely to develop a natural affinity for each other in respect to geometry.

*

While the scene just described was taking place, to which the elevation of the subjects under discussion, and the moral and intellectual eminence of the participants imparted a character of grandeur, which, like all calm, unruffled aspects is easier to understand than to reproduce, the Thuillier establishment was rent by bitter discord, that chronic malady of bourgeois households, which are rendered so subject to it by the characteristic pettiness of the bourgeois mind and passions.

Standing on her chair, with her hair in disorder, and her hands and face covered with dust, Brigitte, with a duster in her hand, was wiping one of the shelves of the closet in which she was replacing her collection of platters, plates and saucers, when she was accosted by Flavie.

"Brigitte," said she, "when you have finished, you'd better come to our rooms, or else I'll send Céleste to you; it seems to me as if she was inclined to play tricks on us."

"How so?" said Brigitte, without pausing in her shelf-cleaning.

"Why, I think she and Madame Thuillier have been to see Abbé Gondrin this morning, and lo and behold! she has just attacked me about Félix Phellion, whom she speaks of as a god; from that to refusing La Peyrade is only a step, you see."

"Those cursed parsons!" said Brigitte; "they have to poke their noses into everything! I didn't want to invite him either; you were the one who insisted on it."

"But it was the proper thing," said Flavie.

"I don't care a fig for your proprieties," retorted the old maid. "A maker of phrases who always says things at the wrong time. Send Céleste to me; I'll arrange matters!—"

At that moment the servant announced the chief clerk from the notary's office at which the contract was to be drawn up, Dupuis being in default.

Without thought for the disorder of her apparel, Brigitte ordered the embryo notary to be shown in, but she did condescend so far as not to talk with him from the top of the perch on which she was roosting.

"Monsieur Thuillier came to the office this morning," said the chief clerk, "to explain to the master the provisions of the contract which he has placed in his hands to draw up; but before inserting the stipulations, we are accustomed to receive from the mouths of the donors themselves a direct statement of their benevolent intentions. Thus, Monsieur Thuillier informed us that he proposed to give the future bride the reversion of the property which he occupies; this is it, doubtless?"

"Yes," said Brigitte, "those are the conditions. I give three thousand francs a year in the three per cents outright; but the bride is to be married under the dotal régime."

"That's right," said the clerk consulting his notes: "Mademoiselle Brigitte Thuillier, three thousand francs a year. Now, there's Madame Céleste Thuillier, wife of Louis-Jérôme Thuillier, who gives, also in three per cents, six thousand francs a year outright and six thousand in trust."

"That's as straight as if the notary had been there," said Brigitte; "but, as it's your custom, if you choose to see my sister, they'll take you to her."

And the old maid ordered the servant to escort the clerk to Madame Thuillier's room.

In a moment he reappeared and announced that there must be a misunderstanding, for Madame Thuillier declared that she would make no sort of stipulation in favor of the marriage.

"That's a pretty good one!" said Brigitte; "come with me, monsieur." Like a hurricane she rushed into Madame Thuillier's room. The poor woman was pale and trembling.

"What's all this you told monsieur, that you wouldn't give anything toward Céleste's *dot?*"

"Yes," said the serf, raising the standard of revolt, but in a very uncertain voice, "it is my intention to do nothing."

"But your intentions," said Brigitte, purple with rage, "are quite new."

"They are my intentions," the rebel contented herself with replying.

"At least you'll tell us the reason why?"

"The marriage doesn't suit me."

"Ah! since when, pray?"

"It is useless for monsieur to be present at our explanation," observed Madame Thuillier; "it isn't to be written in the contract."

"You may well be ashamed," said Brigitte, "for the light in which you exhibit yourself ain't at all flattering.—Monsieur," she continued, addressing the clerk, "it's easier to cut something out of the contract than add to it, ain't it?"

The clerk nodded.

"Put in what you were told; if madame persists we'll simply strike out and initial the canceled words."

The clerk bowed and went out.

"Look here! are you losing your mind?" demanded Brigitte, when the sisters-in-law stood face to face; "what's this crochet you've got into your head?"

"It isn't a crochet, but a deliberate purpose."

"Which you went and bought of your Abbé Gondrin: do you dare tell me that you didn't just come from there with Céleste?"

Céleste and I did see our confessor this morning, but I didn't open my mouth to him as to what I intended to do."

"So the idea of this hullabaloo originated in your own hollow little brain, did it?"

"Yes; as I told you yesterday I think Céleste might make a much more suitable marriage, and I don't propose to rob myself in favor of a marriage I don't approve of."

"A marriage you don't approve of! Oho! so we must consult madame!"

"I know perfectly well that I never amounted to anything in the house. So far as I myself am concerned, it's a long while since I had any mind of my own; but when it comes to the happiness of a child I look upon as my own—"

"*Parbleu!*" cried Brigitte, "you never knew enough to have one; for it's certain that Thuillier—"

"Sister," interposed Madame Thuillier with dignity, "I have been to communion this morning, and there are some things I can't listen to to-day."

"That's our pious hypocrite all over!" cried Brigitte. "Eating the good Lord"—*taking the Holy Sacrament*—"and bringing trouble into families! And you think you'll be let off in any such way as this? Thuillier will be home very soon; he'll give you a dressing down—"

In thus appealing to the husband's authority in aid of her own, Brigitte was guilty of a weakness due to her surprise at this sharp and unforeseen attack upon the dominion she had exerted from time immemorial. The calm voice, which became more resolute from moment to moment, unhorsed her altogether; she had no resource left but insult.

"A lazy lout!" she cried; "a good-for-nothing, who can't even pick up her own handkerchief; and she wants to be mistress of the house!"

"I care so little about being mistress here, that I allowed myself to be silenced last night after I had

ventured to say only two words; but I am mistress of my own money, and as I think Céleste will be very unhappy some day, I propose to keep it to dispose of as I choose."

"Pretty dog!" sneered Brigitte; "her money!"

"Why yes, the money I got from my father and mother, and that I brought to Monsieur Thuillier as my marriage-portion."

"And who invested this money of yours, so's to make it bring in twelve thousand francs a year?"

"I never asked you for an account of any sort," retorted Madame Thuillier mildly; "if it had been lost in such use as you chose to make of it, you'd never have heard a word of complaint from me; but it has increased, so it's no more than fair that I should get the benefit of it. Any way I'm not keeping it for myself."

"Perhaps so; for if you take this line it isn't at all sure that we shall continue to pass through the same door."

"You think Monsieur Thuillier would turn me out! He would have to give reasons for it, and, thank God! I've been a wife he's never had any cause to blame."

"Viper! hypocrite! heartless!" cried Brigitte, at the end of her arguments.

"Sister," said Madame Thuillier, "you are in my house—"

"Get out, dummy!" cried the old maid in the conclusive stages of wrath,—"I tell you, if I didn't hold myself back!—"

And she made a gesture which was at once an insult and a threat.

Madame Thuillier rose to leave the room.

"No, you sha'n't go out," cried Brigitte, forcing her back into her seat; "you shall stay shut up here till Thuillier's decided what to do!"

When Brigitte, with face aflame, reappeared in the room where she had left Madame Colleville, she found there her brother, whose speedy return she announced. Thuillier was radiant.

"My dear," he said to the shrew, not heeding her excitement, "everything is going on splendidly; the conspiracy of silence has come to an end; two papers, the *National* and a Carlist sheet, reproduced one of our articles this morning, and there's a feeble attack on us in one of the ministerial organs."

"Well, everything ain't going on splendidly here, and if this goes on I'll vamoose the ranch!" retorted Brigitte.

"What's the matter now?" demanded Thuillier.

"Why your saucy hussy of a wife has just been making a scene; I'm all of a tremble still."

"Céleste, make a scene!" exclaimed Thuillier; "it would be the first time in her life."

"There's got to be a first time for everything, and if you don't straighten things out—"

"But what was the scene about?"

"Why madame don't choose to have La Peyrade marry her goddaughter, and out of spite at not being able to prevent the marriage she declares she won't promise to give anything in the contract."

"Well, well! don't get excited," said Thuillier, unmoved,—his training in polemics on the *Écho* was making a second Pangloss of him—"I'll fix all that."

"Flavie," said Brigitte, as Thuillier started for his wife's room, "will you do me the favor to go down to your apartment and say to Mademoiselle Céleste that I don't want to see her at this moment, because I'm quite capable of slapping her if she should answer me contrarily; tell her I ain't fond of conspiracies, that we left her free to choose young Monsieur Phellion, that she didn't want him, that everything was arranged with that understanding, and that, if she don't want to find herself cut down to such dowry as you can give her, which a bank clerk could easily carry in his waistcoat pocket—"

"Look here, my dear Brigitte," said Flavie, bristling up at this impertinent sally, "you might do without reminding us so cruelly of our poverty; for, after all, we never asked anything of you and we pay our rent promptly; and, without going so far, Monsieur Félix Phellion would be glad to take Céleste with the dowry a bank clerk could carry in his *bag*."

And she underlined this last word by the emphasis with which she pronounced it.

"Ah! you must have your finger in the pie, too!" cried Brigitte; "oh! well, go and get your Félix! I know, little mother, that the match never suited you any too well; it's unpleasant for you to be only the mother-in-law of your son-in-law."

Flavie had recovered the self-possession which had left her for an instant, and she simply shrugged her shoulders, without replying to the insinuation.

At this juncture Thuillier reappeared; his beatific air had vanished.

"My dear Brigitte," said he to his sister, "you have the kindest heart, but at times you're rather violent!—"

"Bless my soul!" cried the old maid; "I've got to defend myself from this direction too."

"Certainly I don't blame you so far as the general question is concerned, and I've just given Céleste a good scolding; but there are certain forms you must learn to observe."

"What's all this you're giving me, with your forms? where are the forms I didn't observe?"

"Oh! my dear, to raise your hand against your sister!"

"I, I raise my hand against that goose? Well, that's a good one!"

"And then," continued Thuillier, "women of Céleste's age aren't to be put in prison."

"You say I put your wife in prison?"

"You can't say you didn't, for I found her chamber door double-locked."

"*Parbleu!* because in my rage at the shameless things she belched out at me I turned the key without meaning to."

"Come! come!" said Thuillier, "that's no way for people in our station to act."

"So I'm in the wrong now, am I? Well, my boy,

you'll have reason to remember this day, and we'll see how your establishment will get along when I wash my hands of it."

"You won't wash your hands of it," said Thuillier; "housekeeping's your life, and you'd be the first one to suffer."

"We'll see about that," said Brigitte. "After twenty years of devotion, to be treated like the lowest of the low!"

With that the old maid rushed to the door and left the room, slamming the door violently behind her.

Thuillier showed no emotion at her exit.

"Were you there, Flavie," he asked, "when this row took place?"

"No, it was in Céleste's room. So she was a little rough with her, was she?"

"As I said: threatened to strike her, and shut her up like a little girl—It doesn't make any difference if Céleste is a little sleepy, there are limits that ought not to be passed."

"Dear Brigitte isn't always comfortable to live with," said Flavie; "she and I had a little skirmish too just now."

"Oh well," said Thuillier, "this will all blow over. As I was saying, my dear Flavie, we had a great triumph this morning: the *National* copies in full two paragraphs of an article, in which there are several sentences of my own."

Again Thuillier was interrupted in the recital of his political and literary good fortune.

"Can monsieur tell me where the key of the large trunk is?" said Joséphine the cook at the door.

"What do you want it for?" queried Thuillier.

"For mademoiselle; she told me to take it to her room."

"What does she want of it?"

"Mademoiselle is going on a journey I think; all her linen is taken out of the bureau already, and she's folding her dresses as if she was going to pack them."

"Another crazy whim, now!" said Thuillier. "For heaven's sake, Flavie, go and see what maggot she's got in her head."

"Faith, no!" exclaimed Madame Colleville; "go yourself; in her state of exasperation, she's quite capable of beating me."

"So my stupid wife," cried Thuillier, "must needs go and raise this difficulty about the contract! She must have said some pretty sharp things for Brigitte to go off her hinges this way."

"Monsieur doesn't tell me where the key is?" persisted Joséphine.

"I don't know anything about it!" retorted Thuillier angrily; "go and look for it, or else tell her it's lost."

"Oh! yes," said Joséphine, "I think I see myself telling her that."

At that moment the bell of the outer door rang.

"It's La Peyrade without doubt," said Thuillier with satisfaction.

A moment later the Provençal made his appearance. "Faith, my friend," said Thuillier, "it's

high time you came, for the household's in revolt on your account, and you must try to restore peace and tranquillity with your golden tongue."

And he told the advocate the cause and incidents of the civil war that had recently broken out.

Thereupon Théodose said to Madame Colleville:

"The relations between us make it possible for me, I think, without impropriety, to request a few moments' conversation with Mademoiselle Céleste."

There again the Provençal exhibited his accustomed shrewdness; he realized that Céleste Colleville was the key to the situation that he had to deal with in the mission of pacification imposed upon him.

"I'll send for her," said Flavie, "and we'll leave you alone with her."

"My dear Thuillier," said La Peyrade, "you must, quietly and in a few words, urge upon Mademoiselle Céleste the necessity of giving her consent, so as to make her think that that was the purpose for which you sent for her. After that I will dismiss you and look after the rest myself."

The servant was despatched to Madame Colleville's apartments on the entresol, with orders to say to Céleste that her godfather desired to speak with her.

The sort of office where, amid Brigitte's housekeeping chaos, the scene we have been following began, was not a suitable place for the interview

requested by La Peyrade; so, they went into the salon to await Céleste's coming. As soon as she appeared, Thuillier said to her, to follow out the programme agreed upon:

"My child, your mother has told us certain things that surprise me greatly; can it be true, when your contract was to have been signed yesterday, that you haven't yet made up your mind to the marriage we have arranged for you?"

"Godfather," replied Céleste, somewhat taken aback by this abrupt interpellation, "I don't think I said that to mamma."

"Do you mean to say," said Flavie, "that you didn't speak of Monsieur Félix Phellion in most enthusiastic terms of praise just now?"

"I spoke of Monsieur Phellion as everybody speaks of him."

"Come, come!" said Thuillier authoritatively, "this is no time for equivocation; do you refuse to marry Monsieur de la Peyrade or not?"

"My good friend," interposed La Peyrade, "you have an abrupt and downright way of putting questions, which doesn't seem to me just the thing, especially in my presence; will you permit me, as a principal party in interest, to have an understanding with mademoiselle, which may perhaps become necessary? This favor will not be denied me by Madame Colleville, I know; in my position, there can be nothing in my request, I think, to arouse her maternal anxiety."

"I would willingly accede to your wish," replied

Flavie, "if I were not afraid that all this manœuvring would seem to admit a doubt as to something that is irrevocably decided."

"I, my dear madame, on the contrary, most earnestly desire that Mademoiselle Céleste should remain absolutely and entirely free until the last moment. Be good enough therefore to grant my petition, as we say at the Palais."

"Very well!" said Madame Colleville; "you think yourself very clever; but if you let this little miss twist you around her thumb, so much the worse for you!—Come along, Thuillier," she added, "as we seem to be in the way here."

"Mademoiselle," said La Peyrade, drawing forward a chair for Céleste and seating himself when they were left alone, "I dare believe you will do me the justice to admit that until this day I have never wearied you with any expression of my sentiments. I have been well aware of the inclinations of your heart and at the same time of the disinclination of your conscience; I hoped after a while, by making myself very small, to succeed finally in passing between these two opposing currents; but, at the point at which we have now arrived, I do not think that I am either impatient or unfair in begging you to let me know the decision you have reached."

"Mon Dieu! monsieur," replied Céleste, "since you speak so kindly and so frankly I will tell you, what you know already, that, as I was brought up with Monsieur Félix Phellion, and have known him

much longer than you, the idea of marriage, which is always so alarming to a young girl, terrified me less in connection with him than with any other."

"And yet at one time," observed Théodose, "you were authorized to fix your choice on him—"

"I was, but at that time there was a difficulty about religious matters between us."

"And that difficulty has disappeared to-day?"

"Almost," said Céleste. "I am accustomed to subordinate my opinion to that of persons better informed and more enlightened than I am, and you yourself, monsieur, heard how Monsieur l'Abbé Gondrin expressed himself yesterday."

"God forbid," rejoined the Provençal, "that I should presume to cast doubt upon the judgment of so eminent an authority! And yet I will venture to remind you that there are marked differences between the members of the priesthood: some are considered to be too severe, others too indulgent. Monsieur l'Abbé Gondrin is rather a preacher than a casuist—"

"But Monsieur Félix," said Céleste hastily, "seems very willing to justify the vicar's hopes of him, for I know that he called upon him this morning."

"In that case," said La Peyrade with a touch of irony, "he might certainly have gone to see Père Anselme, eh? But, admitting that in the matter of religious principles Monsieur Phellion will soon be in a fair way to satisfy your requirements in every

respect, have you thought, mademoiselle, of the great event that has come to pass in his life?"

"Certainly I have, and it doesn't seem to me that that constitutes a reason for looking upon him with less favor."

"No, but it is a reason why he should look upon himself with more favor. I am afraid, for your sake, that the modesty and humility which were among the greatest charms of his character may be replaced by a self-reliance, a self-satisfaction, which, by developing in him a certain individuality, may eventually divert and dry up the source of the sentimental affections; and then you can scarcely fail to see, mademoiselle, that he who has discovered one world may discover two; can you imagine yourself the rival of a whole firmament?"

"You plead your cause with much spirit," said Céleste, smiling, "and as an advocate I deem you quite as alarming a husband as Monsieur Phellion considered as an astronomer."

"Mademoiselle," rejoined the Provençal, "to speak more seriously, I consider that your heart is admirably well bestowed, and that it is capable of the greatest refinement of sentiment: now, do you know what has happened to Monsieur Phellion? He has lost nothing by his devotion to his old professor; his pious fraud is known to everyone to-day; his discovery is credited to him, and, if I am to believe Monsieur Minard, whom I met only a moment ago, he is to be immediately appointed a chevalier of the Legion of Honor, and very shortly

a member of the Academy of Sciences. If I were a woman, I should be very sorry, I confess, that such an avalanche of good fortune should descend upon a man, at the precise moment that I was about to take him into favor; I should be afraid that the public would accuse me of worshiping the rising sun."

"Oh! monsieur," said Céleste eagerly, "you do not think me capable of such baseness?"

"I, no indeed," said the Provençal; "I but now offered my contrary opinion; but the world is so hasty, so unjust, and at the same time so obstinate in its judgments!"

Seeing that he had succeeded in planting a feeling of uneasiness in the young girl's mind, and as she made no reply, La Peyrade continued:

"Now, to turn to a much more serious aspect of your situation, to something which is not purely personal, taking place, so to speak, between yourself and yourself,—do you know that, at this moment, in this household, you are unwittingly the cause of a most painful and most regrettable state of affairs?"

"I, monsieur?" exclaimed Céleste, in surprise mingled with alarm.

"Yes: you have made a new woman of your godmother, by reason of her excessive affection for you. For the first time in her life she has an idea of her own. With an energetic exhibition of will power, which can be readily explained in the case of one who has never expended much of that article, she declares that she will not become a party to your

contract by making any sort of provision for you, and I need not tell you at whom this unexpected rigor is aimed."

"But, monsieur, I beg you to believe that I was utterly unacquainted with this purpose on the part of my godmother."

"I am well aware of it," said La Peyrade, "and it would be a matter of small consequence, if Mademoiselle Brigitte had not taken her sister-in-law's attitude as an insult, as she had always found her manageable and easily susceptible to her influence. Explanations, in which hard words led on to violence, have taken place. Thuillier, standing between the hammer and the anvil, could do nothing; on the contrary, he has rather made matters worse, without meaning to, and they have now gone so far, that if you could, at this moment, without exposing yourself to some terrible outburst of anger, go to Mademoiselle Thuillier's room, you would find her packing her trunks preparatory to leaving the house!"

"What do you say, monsieur?" cried Céleste in dire dismay.

"The truth, and you can ask the servants to confirm what I say, for I feel that my revelations are hardly credible."

"Why, it's impossible," said the poor child, whose agitation increased with every word the cunning Provençal uttered; "I can not have been the cause of such horrible misery."

"That is to say that you did not wish to be, for,

as a matter of fact, the evil is already done, and Heaven grant that it be not past remedy!"

"My God, what must I do?" said Céleste, wringing her hands.

"I would reply without hesitation, sacrifice yourself, mademoiselle, were it not that, in the present case, the rôle, at once enviable and painful, of officiating priest at the sacrifice is reserved for me."

"Monsieur," said Céleste, "you interpret very ill the resistance I may have made, which has hardly been expressed; I may have had a preference, but I have never looked upon myself as a victim; whatever it is necessary to do to restore tranquillity to this household, in which I have sown discord, I will do without repugnance, even gladly."

"That would be, so far as I am concerned, far more than I can claim," rejoined La Peyrade with mock humility; "but, to obtain the result we both seek, I am bound to tell you that something beyond that is necessary, in appearance at least. Madame Thuillier hasn't laid aside her natural character to resume it immediately, except upon being assured of your submission; in my mouth this statement sounds amazingly ridiculous, but the situation demands it, and it is necessary that your godmother should believe you to be guilty of such notoriously bad taste as to feel an eager desire for the success of my suit, which desire, although assuredly most unnatural, should yet be sufficiently well counterfeited to deceive her."

"Very well," said Céleste, "I will laugh and seem to be happy. My godmother is a second mother to me, monsieur, and what would one not endure for a mother?"

The situation was so pitiful, and Céleste displayed so ingenuously the immensity of her sacrifice side by side with her absolute determination to make it, that, with ever so little heart, La Peyrade would have been disgusted with his rôle; but Céleste to him was a stepping-stone; and, so long as the ladder bears your weight and helps you to ascend, who ever cares to notice whether it is enthusiastic over it or not? It was agreed, therefore, that Céleste should go to her godmother, and should convince her of the mistake she had fallen into relative to a supposed feeling of repulsion on her part, which in reality she had never entertained, for La Peyrade. Madame Thuillier's resistance once overcome, the rest was easy; the advocate would undertake to restore peace between the two sisters-in-law, and it will readily be conceived that he did not lack words to depict to the innocent child a future, wherein, by virtue of his love and devotion, he would cause her to lay aside all regret for having been forced to submit to this moral necessity.

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When Céleste approached her godmother, she found it less difficult to convince her than she had feared. To go so far as she had gone in her rebellion, the poor woman, who was acting in direct opposition to all her instincts and her whole temperament, had to make an almost superhuman effort of her will. At the moment when she received her beloved goddaughter's *false confidences,* the reaction was taking place, and it is more than probable that she would have lacked strength to continue in the path on which she had started. She therefore readily allowed herself to be deceived by the farce played for the Provençal's benefit. As soon as the tempest was allayed in that direction, La Peyrade had no difficulty in making Brigitte understand that she had overstepped the bounds of propriety to some slight extent in putting down the uprising against her authority; as her authority was no longer questioned, Brigitte ceased to bear her sister-in-law malice because she had been upon the point of beating her, and by dint of a few pleasant words and an embrace, poor Céleste paying all the expenses of the war, the difference was arranged.

After dinner, at which no guests were present, the notary, to whose office they were to go the next day informally,—for it was not possible to undertake a new edition of the abortive evening-party,—

called upon Mademoiselle Thuillier. The ministerial functionary came to submit to the parties concerned the draft of the contract before putting it in its final shape. This thoughtfulness was easily accounted for on the part of one who was just entering into business relations with a man of Thuillier's consequence, and was not likely to leave any stone unturned to secure him permanently as a client.

La Peyrade knew too much to proffer any observations whatsoever, upon the draft which was read to him. From certain changes suggested by Brigitte, which gave the notary an exalted idea of the old maid's business capacity, it was very easy for the Provençal to detect a purpose to take rather more precautions against him than were consistent with common decency, but he was determined to make no objections; he knew that a contract is never so closely woven that a determined, intelligent man can not puncture it.

An appointment was made for two o'clock the following day at the notary's office, where the family alone would be present.

During a portion of the evening, profiting by the gracious attitude toward himself that he had advised Céleste to adopt, and which she did her best to counterfeit, La Peyrade played with the poor girl, so to speak, forcing her by the false warmth of his gratitude and his requited love to reply to him in a key that was a thousand miles from reflecting the real state of her heart, which was entirely filled with thoughts of Félix Phellion.

As she watched the Provençal exerting all his powers of fascination, Flavie could but remember the pains he had once taken to twine himself about her heart. "The monster!" she muttered to herself; yet she had no choice but to smile under the torture, and a moment later the discovery of a further great service rendered by La Peyrade to the Thuillier family gave the finishing touch to his influence and his credit.

Minard was announced.

"My dear friends," said he, as he came in, "I have come to tell you a little piece of news that cannot fail to surprise you, and will be a lesson to us all when it comes to admitting strangers into our houses."

"How's that?" said Brigitte with interest.

"That Hungarian woman you were so fond of, Madame Torna, Comtesse de Godollo—"

"What about her?" demanded the old maid.

"Why, she was nobody at all, and for two whole months you coddled the most shameless of kept women."

"Who told you that fable?" said Brigitte, to whom it came very hard to admit that she had fallen into such a trap.

"No one told me any fable," replied the mayor; "I know the thing myself, from having seen it."

"Oho! so you keep company with kept women, do you?" said Brigitte, taking the offensive. "Well, that is a pretty affair! if Zélie only knew that!"

"It isn't he who keeps company with them," said

Thuillier with a sly expression, "but monsieur his son; we've heard about him!"

"Well yes," said Minard, giving way to the ill-humor caused by this manner of receiving his communication; "and as the impudent rascal has had the audacity to commend his strolling player to your notice, so that you would speak of her in your paper, I have nothing to conceal from you. Monsieur Julien is in fact making a great show of keeping a woman who acts at second-rate theatres, and it was in that creature's company that I saw *your friend* Madame de Godollo. It seems to me that I speak plainly enough and that after what I say doubt is no longer possible."

"It may be plain to you," retorted Brigitte, "but unless you're one of the obliging kind of fathers that sons introduce their mistresses to, I'd like to ask you how you happened to be in the company of Monsieur Julien's *blonde*?"

"Ah! do you imagine," said Minard with dignity, "that I am a man to wink at my son's misdeeds?"

"I don't imagine anything," retorted Brigitte; "you were the one who said: 'I was in company'—"

"I didn't say that," Minard interrupted; "I said that I saw Madame de Godollo, whose name is Madame Komorn, and who's no more a countess than you or Madame Colleville,—I saw her in the company of the unworthy creature on whom my son spends his money and his time. Now must I explain the how and the why of the meeting?"

"Why yes," said Brigitte, "an explanation won't come amiss."

"Well,—to show you my way of closing my eyes to my son's dissolute life—as soon as I was informed by an anonymous letter of what he was doing, I took steps to make sure with my own eyes, because I know how much notice one ought to take of anonymous letters in general."

"Say!" said Brigitte, parenthetically, to La Peyrade, "it's funny we haven't received any about you, Monsieur l'Avocat!"

"If you don't choose to listen to me," said Minard, offended at the interruption, "it's no use to ask me for the details."

"Why, we're listening," said Brigitte. "You wanted to see with your own eyes—?"

"Yes," Minard resumed, "and on the day of your dinner-party, when I was late, you know, I had been to the Folies-Dramatiques, the scene of Julien's vagaries, where his creature was to make her début. I wanted to make sure if the villain, who pretended to be sick, but left the house immediately after our departure, was at his post as *claqueur*. It's a cruel thing to admit, I know, but the lunatics who take a fancy to stage women descend even as low as that."

"Was he there?" queried Brigitte, with an air denoting but little sympathy for the mayor's grief.

"No, mademoiselle, he wasn't there. I couldn't see him in the hall; but there was some slight confusion on the stage just as the curtain rose, and as I turned my eyes in that direction I saw that child,

the shame of my old age, talking most familiarly with a fireman and standing so far out from the wings that one of the vulgar frequenters of the pit cried out: 'Pull in your bullet-head, you fraud!' Judge how my father's heart must have rejoiced at that pleasant form of address!"

"There you are!" said Brigitte; "you've spoiled your dear Monsieur Julien."

"I am so far from having spoiled him," said Minard, "that, except for his mother's urgent entreaties I was disposed to take the harshest measures against him; but, when I heard Abbé Gondrin's sensible and tolerant words last night it occurred to me to go and ask his advice, and after doing so I determined to—"

"Do priests understand such things?" said Brigitte disdainfully.

"The proof that they understand them is that the plan the vicar suggested to me succeeded perfectly. I went to see this dangerous young woman's mother and said to her that, in order to put an end to the disorderly conduct of our children, which undoubtedly distressed her as much as it did myself, I had decided to make a sacrifice; that I would go as far as fifteen hundred francs a year, or thirty thousand francs outright as a contribution toward a marriage-portion for her daughter, and I added that there was nothing more to be expected from my son, as I proposed to cut off his supplies. 'Well now! that turns out very well,' the woman replied, 'there's a man who copies for the justice's clerk in the twelfth

arrondissement, who had designs upon Olympe and is trying it on again just now.'"

"Didn't she tell you this copyist's name?" asked La Peyrade.

"I don't think so," said Minard; "if she did I've forgotten it; the whole business was arranged in a moment with the mother, who seems to me a very good sort of woman."

"By the way," observed Brigitte, "I don't see anything of Madame de Godollo yet."

"Be patient," said Minard. "'The only thing I'm afraid of,' the actress's mother said to me, 'is the bad advice of a Polish woman named Madame *Cramone,* who's my daughter's hairdresser and makes her do what she pleases; perhaps if you see her and give her a glimpse of a present, she'd play our game; she's right here, do you want me to call her? I'll tell her, without mentioning your name, that a gentleman wants to speak to her.' I assented to this arrangement, and she went after the foreigner; fancy my surprise at finding myself face to face with your Madame de Godollo, who ran off, laughing like a madwoman, as soon as she caught sight of me!"

"And you're sure it was she?" demanded Brigitte. "If you only got a glimpse of her—"

The crafty Provençal was not the man to let slip such an opportunity as was afforded him to show up the Hungarian's double-dealing.

"Monsieur le Maire made no mistake," said he authoritatively.

"Oho! you know her too, do you," said Mademoiselle Thuillier, "and you let us rub elbows with such vermin?"

"Quite the reverse," said La Peyrade; "I cleared your house of her without scandal, without saying a word to anyone. You remember how abruptly the wretch changed her quarters; it was because I had discovered what she was and gave her two days to clear out, threatening to reveal everything to you if she refused."

"My dear fellow," said Thuillier, pressing the advocate's hand, "you acted with as much prudence as determination. You have put us under still greater obligations to you."

"You see, mademoiselle," said La Peyrade to Céleste, "what a strange patroness a person of your acquaintance had!"

"Thank God!" interposed Madame Thuillier, "Monsieur Félix is above such despicable things."

"Look here, Papa Minard," said Brigitte, "*mum's* the word about all this! We'll keep our mouths sewed up about Monsieur Julien's antics—Will you have a cup of tea?"

"Gladly," replied Minard.

"Céleste," said the old maid, "ring for Henri and tell him to put the big kettle on the fire."

Although the appointment with the notary was not until afternoon of the next day, Brigitte began before eight o'clock in the morning, what her brother called her *ravaud;* that is a slang expression for the noisy, bustling early-morning activity which La

Fontaine has depicted so truly in his fable of *La Vieille et les Deux Servantes*.

Brigitte declared that if they did not set about it in good season they would never be ready. She forbade Thuillier's going to the office of his paper, saying that if he once went away they would not see him again; she scolded Joséphine the cook for not hastening the breakfast-hour, and, in spite of all that had taken place the day before, she found it very hard to refrain from speaking sharply to Madame Thuillier, who did not put in practice so thoroughly as she would have liked, her axiom: that it is better to be too early than too late.

Going next to the Collevilles' to make a similar disturbance, she put her *veto* upon a much too showy toilette which Flavie had in mind to wear, and pointed out expressly to Céleste the hat and dress in which she must appear. As to Colleville, who could not, so he said, dispense with going to his desk at the mayor's office, she forced him to put on his black coat before he went, made him set his watch by hers, and warned him that they would not wait for him *one minute,* if he were late.

It was an excellent joke that Brigitte, after pricking everybody in the side with her sword, came very near not being ready herself at the appointed time. Pretending to assist everyone, independently of her own regular household occupations which she would not have allowed anyone else to attend to for anything in the world, she had her eye and her hand on so many things that she was

over-crowded at the end. However, the tardiness she just avoided was laid to the charge of a hairdresser, whom, to everybody's amazement, she had sent for to *part her hair*. The artist having undertaken to arrange it in the latest style, was obliged to begin his work all over again in order to adapt it to his customer's style of hair-dressing, which consisted simply in never having her hair dressed at all, and in always looking like what is called in vulgar parlance *an angry cat.*

About half-past one La Peyrade, Thuillier, Colleville, Madame Thuillier and Céleste were assembled in the salon. Flavie soon joined them; she fastened her bracelets as she came along in order to avoid a squall, and was delighted to see that she was ahead of Brigitte. That excellent maiden, already in a rage because she felt that she was behindhand, had another cause of exasperation. The occasion seemed to her to call for a pair of corsets, a refinement of style to which she was not accustomed. The unfortunate creature, who was at that moment engaged in lacing her and trying to ascertain just how tightly she wished to be laced, alone knew what appalling, tempestuous occasions these corset days were.

"I'd just as lief have to lace the obelisk," the poor girl would say; "I think *she'd* make it easier for me, and at all events *she* wouldn't be so foul-mouthed."

While the others were laughing together, very quietly, over the overt act of dawdling in which this

Queen Elizabeth was detected, the concierge entered and handed Thuillier a sealed package that had been left with him, with this superscription: *Monsieur Thuillier, Director of* THE ÉCHO DE LA BIÈVRE.—*Very urgent.*

The person to whom it was addressed hastily tore off the wrapper and found within a copy of a ministerial journal which had already exhibited a lack of courtesy and good feeling toward the new management of the *Écho*, by refusing to make the exchange which all periodicals are accustomed to make among themselves.

Rendered curious by the fact that the paper was sent to his house and not to the office of the *Écho*, and sent, too, with evident premeditation as to the time of its arrival, Thuillier quickly unfolded it, and read with feelings that can be imagined the following article, to which his attention was called by a line drawn around it in red ink:

"An obscure organ was about to die a natural death in the darkness, when an ambitious gentleman of recent date took it into his head to galvanize it back to life. His purpose is to use it as a stepping-stone from municipal honors to the envied position of member of the Chamber of Deputies. Luckily, this scheme, now that the light is let in upon it, will come to naught. The electors will not allow themselves to be taken in by the whining advances of this little square of paper, and when the time comes, if ridicule has not already put an end to this impertinent candidacy, we will demonstrate to the upstart that it is not enough for one who aspires to the signal honor of representing the country, to purchase a trashy newspaper, and hire a laundress to translate into French the horrible

patois of his articles and pamphlets. We will confine ourselves to-day to this little warning, but our readers may rest assured that they will be kept informed of the progress of this electoral comedy, if its promoters have the melancholy courage to go on with it."

Thuillier read this declaration of war twice through, and his face did not fail to reflect his discomfiture. He took La Peyrade aside.

"Look at this," he said, "this is a serious matter."

The Provençal read the article.

"Well?" said he.

"What do you mean by 'well?'" demanded Thuillier.

"Why, what do you see in it that's serious?"

"What do I see that's serious? Why I consider the whole article as insulting as possible to me."

"Don't you see," rejoined La Peyrade, "that it's some virtuous Cérizet tossing this fusee in between your legs by way of revenge?"

"Whether it's Cérizet or somebody else, the man who wrote this diatribe is an insolent cur, and the thing sha'n't stop here," cried Thuillier, lashing himself into a rage.

"I don't approve of replying to it, for my part," said La Peyrade. "You are not called by name or described, although it is difficult not to see that the attack is aimed at you. We must let our adversary get farther in; when the right moment comes we'll rap his knuckles well."

"Not at all!" said Thuillier; "it's impossible to sit still under such an insult."

"The devil!" said the advocate; "how thin-skinned you are! Why just consider, my dear fellow, that you're a candidate for office and a newspaper man; you must be a little tougher than this."

"I make it a rule, my friend, never to let anyone tread on my toes. Besides, they announce their intention to renew the attack. So we must cut their impertinence short."

"Why, look here!" said La Peyrade. "It's true that in journalism as in running for office, a fiery temper has its good side; if you make people respect you, you stave off many attacks."

"Certainly," said Thuillier, *principiis obsta;* "we haven't time to-day, but to-morrow I'll go to court about this article."

"To court!" cried the Provençal; "do you mean to call on the courts? Why, there's no ground for a prosecution; neither you nor the paper is mentioned by name, and then a prosecution is such a pitiful kind of a thing; it's like a child who's been beaten and goes whining to mamma or the schoolteacher. If you should tell me that you proposed to have Fleury take the matter up, I should understand that, although it's entirely a personal matter with you, and it's hard to see in it one of those affronts to the general management of the paper which the manager ought to take up."

"Bah!" said Thuillier, "do you imagine, I'd like to know, that I propose to compromise myself with

a Cérizet or some other bully in the employ of the authorities? My dear fellow, I particularly pride myself on the civil courage which does not yield to a prejudice, and which, instead of doing justice with its own hand, has recourse to the means of defence afforded by the law. Besides, in view of the decisions of the Court of Appeals concerning duels, I haven't the slightest desire to render myself liable to exile or a year or two in prison."

"Well," said La Peyrade, "we'll talk of this again; here's your sister and she'd think everything was lost if she should hear us discussing this little annoyance."

As Brigitte appeared, Colleville shouted:

"Full!"

Then he hummed the refrain of *La Parisienne*.

"God! Colleville, what beastly form you are!" said the tardy one, making haste to throw a stone into somebody else's garden to avoid having one thrown into her own. "Well, are we ready?" she added, arranging her cape in front of a mirror. "Let's see what time it is, for we mustn't be beforehand like country-folks."

"Ten minutes to two," said Colleville; "I've got the Tuileries time."

"Well, it's all right then," said Brigitte; "it won't take us longer than that to go to Rue Caumartin.—Joséphine," she cried, going to the door, "we'll dine at six o'clock, so you remember about putting the turkey on the spit and see he ain't burned as that one was the other day.—Well, what's all

this?" she exclaimed, and abruptly slammed the door which she was holding open; "some tiresome man! I hope Henri'll know enough to tell him we've gone out."

On the contrary, Henri came and announced that an elderly gentleman, wearing a decoration and of very *comme il faut* aspect, requested to be received on urgent business.

"Couldn't you tell him nobody was in?"

"That's what I would have done, if mademoiselle had not opened the door of the salon just at that moment, so that the gentleman saw the whole family."

"Oh! you're never wrong," said Brigitte.

"What shall I tell him?" asked the servant.

"Tell him," replied Thuillier, "that I am extremely sorry that I am unable to receive him, but that I have an appointment with a notary in relation to a marriage-contract, and that, if he can return in two hours—"

"I told him all that," said Henri, "and he replied that the contract was the reason of his coming here, and that his visit was of more importance to you than to him."

"Well, receive him and send him off again double-quick," said Brigitte, "that'll be shorter than all this palavering with Monsieur Henri, who's an orator, you know."

La Peyrade, had he been consulted, would not perhaps have arrived at the same conclusion, for he had already had more than one specimen of the

spokes which some secret influence was constantly devising means to put in the wheels of his marriage, and this visit had an ominous look to him.

"Show him into my study," said Thuillier, adopting the course advised by his sister, and opening a door leading from the salon to the room where he proposed to receive the importunate visitor, he led the way thither.

The next moment, Brigitte, with her eye at the keyhole, exclaimed:

"Well, I declare! my idiot of a brother has asked him to sit down, and they're at the far end of the room, so that I can't hear a word they're going to say."

La Peyrade, meanwhile, was walking back and forth, his internal agitation concealed beneath an indifferent exterior; he even joined the three women who were standing in a group and said a few gracious words to Céleste, which she received with the laughing, joyous expression which the spirit of her rôle demanded. Colleville was killing time by making an anagram of the six words: *Le journal, l'Écho de la Bièvre;* and from this combination he soon produced the following phrase which contained little encouragement for the future of the enterprise: *O d'Écho, jarni! la bévue réell!*— * but a final *e* was lacking to complete the last word, so the *work* missed its point to some extent.

"He takes snuff!" Brigitte was saying, with her eye still on the adjoining room; "his gold box

* O Echo, by heavens! the real blunder.

beats Minard's *all hollow,* I never saw one like it! Oh! perhaps it's nothing but silver-gilt," she added on reflection. "But he's doing all the talking and Thuillier sits there listening like a noodle. I don't care, I'm going in and tell 'em not to keep ladies waiting this way."

As she had her hand on the latch she heard Thuillier's companion speaking quite loud, whereupon she replaced her eye at the keyhole.

"He's got up at last!" she said with satisfaction.

But, ascertaining a moment later that she was mistaken, and that the little old man had left his chair in order to continue the conversation with more animation, as he strode up and down the room:

"Well, I'm going in, blessed if I ain't," she exclaimed, "and I'm going to tell Thuillier we'll go ahead; he can come after us when he's got through."

With that the old maid bestowed two sharp, imperative little blows on the door, and walked resolutely into her brother's study.

Thereupon La Peyrade had the bad taste, explained, however, by his overpowering curiosity, to take his turn at looking through the keyhole to see what was going on. In the first place he thought that he recognized the little old man whom he had once seen, under the title of Commander, at Madame de Godollo's; next, he noticed that Thuillier was speaking to his sister with an impatient air and authoritative gestures which had nothing in common with his customary deference and submission.

"It seems," said Brigitte, returning to the salon,

"that Thuillier is tremendously interested in that creature's conversation, for he brutally ordered me to retire, although the little fellow said to me, politely enough, that they were almost through! 'But be sure and wait for me!' Jérôme added. Since he's had his newspaper I'd never know him; he acts as if he was ruling the world with a wand—"

"I'm afraid that he'll allow himself to be taken in by some schemer," said La Peyrade. "I am almost sure I saw that little old fellow at Madame Komorn's the day I went to tell her to clear out; he must be one of the same gang."

"Then you ought to have told me!" rejoined Brigitte; "I'd have asked him about the countess in a way to show him that we know all there is to know about his Hungarian."

At that moment the sound of moving chairs was heard. Brigitte ran to the door.

"Yes," she said, "he's going; Jérôme is showing him out and bowing all over him."

As Thuillier did not appear for some moments Colleville had time to go to the window, and as he saw the old man stepping into the handsome coupé of which the reader has already heard, he cried:

"The deuce! that's a tidy livery! At all events he's a schemer of the first class."

At last Thuillier entered the room; his expression was thoughtful, his speech very solemn. "My dear La Peyrade," he said, "you never told us that there was another marriage project that you had thought seriously of?"

"Oh! yes, I told you that a very rich heiress had been offered me, but that my inclination led me here, and that I didn't care to follow the thing up, so that there has never been any serious thought of it."

"Well, I think you are wrong to treat this proposition so lightly."

"What! do you, in presence of these ladies, reproach me for being faithful to my earliest wishes and my old-time engagements?"

"My friend, the interview I have just had has been very instructive to me; and when you know all I know, and many other details which concern you alone, and will be imparted to you, I think you will agree with me. One thing is certain, that we won't go to the notary's to-day; and, so far as you are concerned, the best thing you can do is to go and see Monsieur du Portail without delay."

"That name again! it pursues me like remorse," cried La Peyrade.

"Yes! go there at once; he expects you; that's an indispensable preliminary to our going any farther. When you have seen that excellent man, if you still persist in claiming Céleste's hand, why, we'll carry out our plans; until then, we won't budge."

"But, my poor boy," said Brigitte, "you've let yourself be bamboozled by a sharper; he's one of the Godollo's crowd."

"Madame de Godollo isn't at all what you think," replied Thuillier, "and the best thing we

can do in this house is never to say a word about her, good or bad. As to La Peyrade, as this isn't the first time he's had such an invitation as this, I really don't understand why he hesitates to go and see this Monsieur du Portail—"

"Look here!" said Brigitte, "has the little old man bewitched you?"

"I tell you that this little old man is all his exterior indicates. He has seven crosses and a magnificent turn-out, and he told me some things which surprised me beyond measure."

"Perhaps he's a fortune-teller with cards like Madame Fontaine, who ran in my head so at one time, that Madame Minard and I went to consult her, thinking we'd have a good laugh at the old witch."

"Well, if he isn't a sorcerer," said Thuillier, "he's a man with a very long arm, and I think that anyone would find himself in a bad way who didn't pay some attention to what he says. Why he only caught a glimpse of you, Brigitte, and he described your whole character to me; he said you were a clever woman, born to command."

"The fact is," said Brigitte, licking her lips at this compliment as if she had been eating cream, "that the old fellow looked as if he was about right. —Look you, my dear boy," she said to La Peyrade, "go and see Du Portail as such a bigwig as that insists on it; I don't see that it binds you to anything."

"Certainly not," said Colleville; "for my part,

I'd go thirty times a day to all the Du Portails or all the *Du Portaux* on earth, if anyone advised me to."

As the scene was beginning to resemble that in the *Barbier de Séville*, where everyone tells Basile to go to bed because he smells of the fever, La Peyrade took his hat with a bad grace, and went whither destiny summoned him: *Quo sua fata vocabant.*

*

Upon arriving at Rue Honoré-Chevalier, La Peyrade felt some doubt; the dilapidated aspect of the house to which he had been directed made him fear that he had mistaken the number. It did not seem to him that a personage of the apparent consequence of this Monsieur du Portail, who weighed so heavily upon his life, could live in such a place. It was with some hesitation, therefore, that he applied to Sieur Perrache, the concierge. But when he got as far as the reception-room of the suite that was pointed out to him, the handsome livery of the old valet Bruneau, and the extremely comfortable appearance of his surroundings seemed to him to meet his expectations fully. Ushered into the annuitant's office as soon as his name was announced, his surprise knew no bounds when he found himself in the presence of the pretended commander, Madame de Godollo's friend, or, if the reader prefers, of the same little old man of whom he had caught a glimpse at Thuillier's a moment before.

"At last," said Du Portail, rising to draw forward a chair, "at last I am permitted to see you, master refractory; you have kept me pulling your ear a long while!"

"May I know, monsieur," said La Peyrade haughtily, and without taking the chair that was offered him, "what object you have in interfering in

my affairs? I don't know you, and I may add that the place where I saw you on a single occasion did not create in me an immoderate desire to make your acquaintance."

"Where did you see me, pray?" asked Du Portail.

"At the house of a sort of prostitute who called herself Madame la Comtesse de Godollo."

"Where monsieur must consequently himself have been, and upon a less disinterested errand than mine," retorted the little old man.

"I didn't come here," said Théodose, "with the purpose of matching wits. I am entitled, monsieur, to an explanation of all your conduct in relation to myself; I venture therefore to beg you not to postpone the moment by pleasantries, for I am by no means in the mood to contend with you in that field."

"Very well, my dear man, take a seat," said Du Portail; "I am not in the mood, myself, to twist my neck off talking up at you."

There was nothing unreasonable in this suggestion, and it was made in a tone calculated to give the impression that the annuitant was not to be frightened much by high and mighty airs. La Peyrade therefore decided to defer to his host's wish; but he took pains to perform the act of compliance with the worst possible grace.

"Monsieur Cérizet," said Du Portail, "a man who occupies an extremely good position in the world, and has the honor to be one of your friends—"

"I don't see the man now," said La Peyrade hastily, fully understanding the old man's malicious meaning.

"Well," continued Du Portail, "at the time when you did sometimes have occasion to see him, for instance, when you paid for his dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale,* I employed the estimable Monsieur Cérizet to broach the subject of a marriage—"

"Which I refused to consider," interposed Théodose, "and which I refuse to-day more emphatically than ever."

"That's just the question," rejoined the annuitant; "for my part I think, on the contrary, that you'll accept, and it is for the purpose of talking the matter over that I have so long desired to meet you."

"But what to you is this mad girl whom you're throwing at my head?" said La Peyrade. "She's not your daughter or any relation, I fancy,—if she were you'd use more discretion in your husband-hunting in her behalf."

"This girl," said Du Portail, "is the daughter of one of my friends; she lost her father more than ten years ago; after that event I took her to live with me, and I have given her all the care that her painful plight demands; her fortune, which I have largely increased, added to mine, of which I intend to make her the heir, makes her a very wealthy *parti.* I know that you are not a bitter foe to handsome dowries, for you go to the lowest haunts in search of them: to Thuillier households for example;

or, to use your own expression, to the abode of *prostitutes* whom you hardly know; I rather imagined therefore that you would not object to take one from my hand, in view of the fact that my young lady's infirmity is declared by the doctors to be quite curable, whereas you can never cure Monsieur and Mademoiselle Thuillier, one of being a stupid fool, the other a shrew, any more than you could cure Madame Komorn of being a woman of very moderate and ephemeral virtue."

"It may suit me," retorted La Peyrade, "to marry the goddaughter of a fool and a shrew if I choose to do so; in like manner, if passion carries me so far, I may become the husband of a coquette; but mark my words, monsieur, neither you, nor the most powerful or clever man on earth, could make me accept the Queen of Sheba, by trying to force her on me."

"For that reason I propose to appeal to your common sense and your intelligence, but after all one must have people within reach in order to speak to them. Come, let us talk over your situation a bit, and don't you be alarmed, if, like a surgeon who is striving to cure his patient, I put my hand pitilessly on the sores of a life which has been thus far very laborious and very troubled. The first point to be settled is that the Céleste Colleville affair has entirely fallen through."

"Why so?" said La Peyrade.

"Because I have just left Thuillier, and I frightened him out of his wits, by describing all the misfortunes he had already undergone, and all he had

still to undergo, if he persisted in his purpose of marrying his goddaughter to you. He knows now that it was I who paralyzed the benevolent intentions of Madame la Comtesse du Bruel in the matter of the Cross; that I caused his pamphlet to be seized; that I let loose in his family the Hungarian who played you all so well; that I am responsible for the fact that firing has begun to-day in the ministerial journals, which will become more and more brisk every day, to say nothing of the other machinery which will, in case of need, be set in motion against his candidacy. So you see, my dear sir, not only have you no longer in Thuillier's eyes the merit of being his great elector, but you are the stumbling-block in the way of his ambition; it is enough to tell you that the fortifications by which you held this family in check—a family, who, at bottom, have never sincerely cared for you—are entirely demolished and dismantled."

"But who, in heaven's name, are you, to have done all this in which you take such pride?" demanded La Peyrade.

"I won't reply that you are very inquisitive, for I shall tell you directly; but we will continue, if you please, the autopsy of your existence, to-day wrecked, and for which I am preparing a glorious resurrection. You are twenty-eight years old, and have before you a career as yet hardly sketched, in which I forbid you to take another step. A few days hence the council of the order of advocates will assemble and will pass censure more or less

absolutely upon your conduct in the matter of that real estate which you were simple enough to put in Thuillier's hands. Now, you must not form any illusions; even though you receive nothing but a severe admonition,—and I am playing for the lightest penalty,—an advocate isn't like the cabdriver whom the censure of Parliament does not prevent from driving his cab; once censured, you are as good as struck from the list—"

"And I am indebted to your good will, no doubt, for this precious result?" said La Peyrade.

"Yes, and I pride myself on it," Du Portail replied, "for, in order to tow you to port, it was necessary first of all to clear away all your rigging; otherwise you'd have insisted upon cruising under your own sails in the shoals of bourgeoisie."

Realizing at last that he had to do with a powerful adversary, the adroit Provençal thought fit to modify his attitude, and he said with a much more reserved air:

"You will allow me, monsieur, to await more ample developments before expressing my gratitude."

"Here you are, then," continued Du Portail, "at twenty-eight years of age, without a sou, without a profession, with very—modest antecedents, and old acquaintances like Monsieur Dutocq and *courageous* Cérizet; owing Mademoiselle Thuillier ten thousand francs, which in good conscience you are called upon to repay her, even if you had not agreed to do so out of respect for your self-esteem; to Madame

Lambert twenty-five thousand, which you are undoubtedly extremely anxious to replace in her hands as soon as possible; lastly, this marriage, your last hope, your plank of safety, has just now become impossible. Between ourselves, if I have any reasonable proposition to make you, don't you think you'd be a little inclined to listen to me?"

"There will always be time enough for me to prove the contrary," La Peyrade replied, "and I shall not come to any decision, so long as the projects you have chosen to form for me are not known to me."

"I have caused something to be said to you concerning a marriage," Du Portail resumed; "that marriage is closely connected in my thoughts with another scheme of existence which, in your case, devolves upon you, so to speak, by hereditary right. Do you know what that uncle whom you came to Paris in search of in 1829, was doing here at that time? In your family, he was looked upon as a millionaire; and yet, having died suddenly before you could join him, he didn't leave enough money to bury him; the pauper's hearse and the common grave,—that's what he came to."

"You knew him, then?" asked Théodose.

"He was my dearest and oldest friend," Du Portail replied.

"Why, in that case," said La Peyrade hastily, "a certain hundred louis that were brought to me by a stranger in the early days of my life in Paris—?"

"Came from myself," replied the annuitant;

"unfortunately, being absorbed by a press of urgent business which you will understand better in a moment, I was unable to follow up the kindly interest in you with which your uncle's memory inspired me: that is why I left you lying upon straw in a garret until, like the medlar, you reached that mature stage of poverty which was certain to call down upon you the hand of a Dutocq or a Cérizet."

"I am none the less indebted to you, monsieur," said La Peyrade, "and if I had known that you were the generous protector who has always remained a mystery to me, pray believe that I should have been the first to seek an opportunity to see you, without awaiting a summons, and to thank you."

"Let us have done with compliments," said Du Portail; "and to come to the serious part of our conference, what should you say if I should tell you that that uncle, whose protection and support you came to Paris to seek, was one of the agents of the occult power which is the theme of so many absurd fables, and the object of such idiotic prejudices?"

"I don't understand very well," said La Peyrade with anxious interest; "may I venture to ask you to be more explicit?"

"For example," continued Du Portail, "imagine that your uncle was still living and should say to you: 'My gallant nephew, you are seeking fortune and influence; you undertake to distinguish yourself from the common herd and to be concerned in all the great affairs of your day; you would like to

find employment for your mind, keen, alert, resourceful and somewhat inclined to intrigue as it is, and to display in a more exalted and fashionable sphere the powerful will and the inventive faculty which you have thus far wasted in exploiting the toughest, dryest object on this earth, to wit, a bourgeois. Very well; bend your head, my dear nephew, and go with me through this low door I am going to open, which leads into a great house of unsavory reputation, but which is less black than it's painted. Having crossed the threshold you will stand erect to the full height of your genius, if there is a spark of genius in you: statesmen, even kings will admit you to share their most secret thoughts; you will be their unknown collaborator, and, in that way, none of the delights which money and the loftiest functions can promise a man will be forbidden to you or unattainable by you.'"

"But, monsieur," objected La Peyrade, "without venturing even yet to understand you, I will remind you that my uncle died in such poverty that public charity had to be called upon to bury him—"

"Your uncle," replied Du Portail, "was a man of rare talents, but he had in his character certain weak points by which his whole career was compromised. He was extravagant, very fond of women, and without thought for the future; he chose also to partake of that joy suited only to men of common mould, and which for exceptionally great geniuses is the worst of embarrassments and pitfalls; I mean a family: he had a daughter he was

mad over, and it was on that side that deadly enemies opened a breach in his life, and were able to plan the terrible catastrophe which brought it to a close. Your uncle—I am taking up your argument, you see—died by poison."

"And that you consider an encouragement to walk in the obscure path in which he would have desired me to follow him?" said La Peyrade.

"But what if I were the man, my dear sir, who proposes to show you the way?" replied Du Portail.

"You, monsieur!" said La Peyrade in stupefaction.

"Yes, I, who was your uncle's pupil, and later his protector and his providence; I, whose influence has done nothing but grow greater day by day for nearly half a century; I, who am rich, and to whom successive governments, as they overturn one another like card houses, come to seek safety and strength for the future; I, the manager of a vast theatre of puppets, where I have *Columbines* of the style of Madame de Godollo; I, who, if it were essential to the success of one of my vaudevilles or dramas, could exhibit myself to you to-morrow, wearing the grand cross of the Legion of Honor, the order of the Garter, or the Golden Fleece! And do you want to know why neither you nor I will die of poison; why I, more fortunate than contemporary crowned heads, can transmit my sceptre to the successor I select? Because, like you, my young friend, despite your southern look, I was cold, profoundly calculating, and never wasted my time on

trifles at the door; warmth, when I was required, by the necessity of the moment, to exhibit that quality, never existed below the surface. It is more than probable that you have heard of me; to you, therefore, I will open a window in my cloud; look at me and take notice that I have no cloven foot and no tail at the base of my spine; on the contrary, in me you see the features of the most inoffensive annuitant in the Quartier Saint-Sulpice; in this quarter, where I can say that I have enjoyed universal esteem for five and twenty years, my name is Du Portail, while to you, if you will permit me, I will be known as CORENTIN!"

"Corentin!" cried La Peyrade in horrified surprise.

"Yes, monsieur, and you will see that by disclosing this secret I lay my hand upon you and enroll you. Corentin! *the greatest police official of modern times,* as I am called by the author of an article in the *Biography of Living Men,* to whom, by the way, I must do the justice to say that he knows nothing about my life."

"Monsieur," said La Peyrade, "I most assuredly will keep the secret; but the place you are good enough to offer me with you—"

"Frightens you, or at least makes you uneasy," interrupted the ex-annuitant hastily. "Even before you have given any thought to the matter, the word terrifies you. The po-o-o-lice!—should you reproach yourself for not sharing the terrible prejudice which brands them on the forehead?"

"Most certainly," said La Peyrade, "the police are a useful institution, but I do not think they have always been slandered. If it's an honorable profession, why do they who practice it always keep out of sight?"

"Because everything that threatens society, and that it is their mission to put down, is concocted and arranged in the darkness. Do thieves and conspirators put upon their hats: *'I am Guillot, shepherd of the flock?'* and should we, when we are trying to get at them, send a bell ahead, as the commissioner does in the morning by his understrapper to warn the concierges to sweep the sidewalks in front of their houses?"

"Monsieur," said La Peyrade, "when a feeling is universal, it ceases to be a prejudice and becomes an opinion, and such opinion should be a guide to every man who desires the esteem of his fellow-men as well as his own."

"And when you fleeced that bankrupt notary," cried Corentin; "when you robbed a corpse to enrich the Thuilliers, you desired your own esteem and that of the council of your order; and who knows whether there haven't been even blacker deeds than those in your life! I am a more honorable man than you, for, outside of the duties of my office, I haven't a single shameful act to reproach myself with, and when the right has been made clear to me, I have done it everywhere and always. Do you imagine that the guardianship of this mad girl for eleven years has been all roses? But she

was your uncle's, my old friend's daughter, and when, feeling that I am growing old, I come to you, with heaps of shining crowns, and tell you to relieve me of this duty—"

"What!" said La Peyrade, "this mad girl my uncle La Peyrade's daughter?"

"Yes, monsieur, the girl I wish you to marry is Peyrade's daughter, for he had democratized his name; or, if you prefer, she is Père Canquoëlle's daughter, that being a *nom de guerre* he took from the little estate of Canquoëlles, where your father died of hunger, leaving eleven children. Don't you see that, although your uncle was so closemouthed about his family, I know it root and branch as if I belonged to it? Don't you see that, before selecting you for your cousin, I learned all there is to be known about you? You don't think much of the police, but as the common people say, the handsomest part of your nose is made of them; your uncle was one of them, and, thanks to the police, he was the confidant, I had almost said the friend of Louis XVIII., who took infinite pleasure in his conversation; your cousin is a chip of the old block; your character and talents, and the absurd position in which you have placed yourself, everything about you gravitates toward the conclusion I propose to you, and, monsieur, that conclusion is to take my place, if you please, to succeed Corentin! And you think that I haven't a firm grasp upon you, and that you will succeed in escaping me by any idiotic arguments based upon middle-class self-esteem!"

It must have been that La Peyrade was not so obstinately bent upon declining the honor as we might suppose, for the great police official's warmth, and his appropriation, so to speak, of his person, brought a smile to his face.

Meanwhile, Corentin had risen and seemed to be talking to himself as he strode up and down the room where this scene took place.

"The police!" he cried; "we might say of them as Basile said to Bartholo, of calumny: *The police, monsieur! the police, you don't know what it is that you despise!* And, in point of fact," he continued a moment later, "who despises them? Imbeciles, who know no better than to insult the institution that gives them security. For suppress the police, and you suppress civilization. Do you suppose they care for the esteem of those people? They want to inspire only one sentiment in them: fear, the great lever with which we govern men, a vile race, whose execrable instincts we can hardly succeed in keeping down, with the aid of God, hell, the executioner and the gendarmes."

The panegyrist of the police stopped in front of La Peyrade and eyed him with a disdainful smile.

"So you're one of those idiots," he said, "who see in the police nothing but a collection of spies and informers, and who have never suspected that there are among them shrewd politicians, diplomatists of the first order, Richelieus in short gowns? Why, monsieur, was not Mercury, Mercury the wisest of the heathen gods, the very incarnation of the police?

To be sure he was also the god of robbers. We are much to be preferred to him, therefore, for we don't allow pluralism."

"But," said La Peyrade, "Vautrin, the famous chief of the secret service—?"

"Oh yes! there's always mud in the shallows," retorted Corentin, resuming his promenade, "but don't you make any mistake; Vautrin's a man of genius, but his passions, like your uncle's, have led him into crooked paths. But go up higher—for therein lies the germ of the whole question, namely, what step of the ladder one has the talent to roost on—: is the Préfect of Police, a minister who is honored and respected and made much of, a mere spy? Well, monsieur, I am the occult prefect of police of the diplomatic and higher political circles, and you hesitate to mount that throne from which Charles the Fifth in his old age thought fit to descend? To seem of little consequence and to do great things, to live in a comfortably fitted den like this, and to command the light; to have at your orders an invisible army, always ready, always devoted, always obedient; to know the reverse side of everything; never to be the dupe of any plot, because you hold all the wires right here in your hand; to see through every wall, to fathom every secret, to search every man's heart and conscience: that, monsieur, is what you are afraid of! and yet you do not fear to befoul yourself in the obscure and miry bog of the Thuillier household; you, a blooded horse, allow yourself to be harnessed to a cab, to the

ignoble task of looking after the campaign and the newspaper of that parvenu bourgeois!"

"One does what one can," replied La Peyrade.

"It's a very remarkable thing, too," continued Corentin, answering only his own thought, "that our language, with more fairness and more gratitude than public opinion, puts us in our proper place; for it made the word *police* the synonym of civilization and the antipodes of a barbarous existence, when it decreed that we should write: 'A well *policed* State.' So we worry very little, I promise you, over the prejudice which tries to sully our fame; no one knows men better than you do, and to know them is to scorn their scorn as much as their esteem."

"There is certainly much truth in the thesis you work out with such warmth," said La Peyrade at last.

"Much truth!" echoed Corentin, resuming his seat; "say rather that it is the truth and nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth. However, my dear sir, enough of this for to-day. To be my successor in my functions, and to marry your cousin with a dowry which can hardly fall below five hundred thousand francs,—that is my offer. I don't ask you for an answer at this moment; I should have no confidence in a resolution which was not the result of serious reflection. To-morrow I shall be at home all the morning; may my conviction then have succeeded in forming yours!—I will not say *adieu*, but *au revoir*, Monsieur de la Peyrade,"

he added, dismissing his visitor with a short, brusque nod.

With that, Corentin drew forward a small console whereon he found all the necessary ingredients for preparing a glass of *eau sucrée*, which he had in truth well earned, and without looking at the Provençal, who left the room a little abashed, he seemed entirely absorbed in that prosaic occupation.

Was it altogether necessary that, on the day following his interview with Corentin, a visit from Madame Lambert, now become a pressing and importunate creditor, should supervene to influence La Peyrade's decision? Was it not true, as the tempter had said to him the day before, that his character, his talents, his aspirations, the imprudences of his past life, everything seemed to give him an irresistible impetus down the steep incline toward the strange solution of the problem of life which had suddenly been suggested to him?

Fatality, if we may so say, was most lavish with the complications to which he was at last to yield. It was the thirty-first of October, and the long vacation at the Palais was drawing near its end; on the second of November the sessions of the courts would begin anew, and, just as Madame Lambert left him, the advocate received, in addition, a summons to appear before the council of his order on that day.

To Madame Lambert, who was very urgent that he should settle with her, on the pretext that she should very soon return to her native country, and was about to leave Monsieur Picot's house, he said:

"Come and see me day after to-morrow at the same time; your money will be ready."

To the suggestion that he should appear and explain his conduct before his peers, he replied that he did not recognize the right of the council to examine him concerning an incident of his private life. It was an ill-judged reply. It was certain to lead to the expunging of his name from the list of advocates in the royal courts; but it had an appearance of dignified remonstrance which afforded his self-esteem a means of escape.

Finally he wrote a note to Thuillier to inform him that as a result of his visit to Du Portail he was compelled to accept the suggestion of a different marriage. He, therefore, gave Thuillier back his word, and took back his own. All this was said coldly, without a word of regret for the alliance he renounced. In a postscript he added:

"We shall have to talk over my position on the newspaper;" thus indicating that his plans might make it impossible for him to retain it.

He was careful to make a copy of this letter, and when, an hour later, he was questioned in Corentin's study as to the result of his reflections, he handed the great man, for his perusal, the matrimonial resignation he had just despatched.

"That's all right," said Corentin, "but so far as your position on the paper goes, perhaps you may have to retain it for some little time; that blockhead's candidacy upsets the plans of the government, and we're talking about tripping up the

worthy municipal councillor's heels; in your position of editor-in-chief with full power, you may perhaps be able to play some trick on him that will help us out, and I fancy your conscience wouldn't be inclined to rebel against such a mission?"

"No, indeed not!" said La Peyrade; "the memory of the humiliation I've had to undergo so long, will lead me rather to take extraordinary pleasure in lashing the bourgeois brood."

"Take care!" said Corentin; "you're young yet, and you must look out for these attacks of bile. In our stern profession, we love nobody, we hate nobody. In our eyes, men are the pawns,—of wood or ivory according to their quality,—with which we play our games. We must be like the sword which cuts what is given it to cut, but is careful only to be keen-edged and sharp, and bears no good or ill-will to any man. Now let us talk of your cousin, to whom I suppose you have some curiosity to be presented."

La Peyrade had no occasion to feign eagerness, for that which he felt was genuine enough.

"Lydie de la Peyrade," said Corentin, "is nearing thirty years of age, but her virginity, combined with a mild form of insanity, which has held her aloof from passion of every sort, from all the ideas, all the impulses by which the springs of life are drained, has, in a certain sense, embalmed her in perpetual youth. You would not say that she was more than twenty; she is fair and slender; her face, instinct with refinement, is especially remarkable

for its expression of angelic sweetness. Deprived of her reason as the result of the terrible catastrophe to which her father succumbed, there is something infinitely touching in her monomania; she always has in her arms, or lying by her side, a bundle of linen which she rocks and tends as carefully as if it were the sick child she imagines; and with the exception of my valet Bruneau and myself, whom she knows, she takes everybody she sees for a doctor, and consults them all and listens to them like oracles. A critical experience that she passed through some time ago convinced Horace Bianchon, that prince of his profession, that if reality could be substituted for this long comedy of maternity, her reason would resume its empire. Would it not be a pleasant task to bring back the light to this soul wherein it is but veiled? and does it not seem to you that the bond of kinship nature has formed between you, points to you more particularly as the fitting person to undertake this cure, of which, I say again, in the opinion of Bianchon and the two other eminent specialists who have seen the patient in consultation with him, there is no question as to the success? Now I am going to take you to Lydie's presence; and remember to play your rôle of doctor; for the only means of disturbing her customary gentleness is to fail to enter heartily into her constant idea of a consultation."

After passing through several rooms La Peyrade and his conductor were on the point of entering that one in which Lydie was ordinarily to be found,

when she did not require more space to walk up and down rocking her imaginary infant; but suddenly their steps were arrested by two or three chords struck by a master hand upon a piano of a most beautiful tone.

"What's that?" asked La Peyrade.

"That's Lydie," Corentin replied, with what one might have taken for an outburst of paternal pride; "she is an admirable musician, and although she no longer composes beautiful tunes, as in the days when her mind was clear, she produces some with her fingers that often go to my heart.—Corentin's heart," added the old fellow with a smile; "I fancy a virtuoso couldn't receive a greater compliment than that! But let's sit down and listen; if we should go in, the concert would at once come to an end and the consultation begin."

La Peyrade was struck dumb with amazement as he listened to an improvisation in which the union, so rarely perfect, of inspiration and science, opened to his impressionable nature a wellspring of emotions as deep as they were unlooked-for. Corentin enjoyed the surprise to which the Provençal gave vent from moment to moment by admiring exclamations.

"Hein! how's that for playing?" he exclaimed, making the most of what he had to sell, "Liszt can't hold a candle to her!"

The performer followed up a very lively *scherzo* with the first notes of an *adagio* movement.

"Ah! she's going to sing," said Corentin, recognizing the air.

"She sings too?" asked La Peyradé.

"Like Pasta and Malibran; listen to that, will you!"

Following a few measures of a prelude in *arpeggios* a vibrating voice burst forth, whose tones seemed to move the Provençal to the extreme depths of his soul.

"How music affects you!" said Corentin. "You were certainly made for each other."

With a gesture La Peyrade imposed silence upon his talkative companion, and as the notes fell from the singer's lips, his emotion, waxing greater from moment to moment, at last extorted from him this cry, which in its turn seemed to make a deep impression upon Corentin:

"O my God! it is the same air! the same voice!"

"Do you mean that you have met Lydie somewhere before?" asked the great police official.

"I don't know—I don't think so," replied La Peyrade in a broken voice; "in any event it was a long while ago—But that tune—that voice—it seems to me—"

"Let's go in," said Corentin.

And, opening the door suddenly, he drew the Provençal into the room after him.

Having her back turned to the door and prevented by the noise of the piano from hearing what was going on behind her, Lydie noticed nothing.

"Look!" said Corentin, "have you any remembrance of her?"

La Peyrade walked forward a few steps, and as

soon as he could see but the mad girl's profile, he cried out, striking his hands together over his head:

"'Tis she!"

"Silence!" said Corentin.

But at Théodose's cry Lydie had turned; her eyes did not go beyond Corentin.

"What a wicked, tiresome man you are," she said, "to come and annoy me so! You know perfectly well that I don't like to have anybody listen to me. But no!" she added, catching sight of La Peyrade's black coat, "you have brought the doctor; it's very nice of you, I was going to ask you to send for him: the little thing has done nothing but cry since this morning; it's no use for me to try and sing her to sleep, nothing comes of it."

And, to get what she called her child, she ran to a corner, where, with two chairs turned bottom upwards and the cushions of a couch, she had made something resembling a cradle.

As she walked toward La Peyrade, carrying her precious burden in one hand, with the other Lydie was busily occupied arranging her *little darling's* cap, having no eyes for anything except the insane creation of her sick brain. As she drew near, so that Théodose had a full, unobstructed view of her, he fell back, pale, trembling and wild-eyed, apparently in abject terror, nor did he stop until he stumbled against a chair behind him, which threw him off his balance and received him as he fell.

So shrewd a man as Corentin, who, moreover,

was familiar with the smallest details of the horrible drama in which Lydie had lost her reason, had not failed already to divine and comprehend the whole story, but it was a part of his plan to allow the bright light of proof to force its way into this ghastly darkness.

"Look, doctor," Lydie was saying, putting aside the linen clothes and placing the pins between her lips as she removed them, "see if she isn't growing visibly thinner!"

La Peyrade did not trust himself to reply; with his face hidden behind his handkerchief, his breath came in gasps which would have made it impossible for him to utter a word.

Thereupon, with one of those bursts of feverish impatience which were the result of her mental condition, she seized Théodose's arm and forced him to let her see his features.

"Look at him, doctor, will you!" she cried.— "My God!" she exclaimed as soon as she saw the Provençal's face.

Dropping the package of linen she held in her arms she threw herself violently back. Her eyes became haggard; passing her white hands hurriedly across her face and through her hair, which was soon in disorder, she seemed to be making an effort to awaken a sleeping, rebellious memory. Then, like a frightened horse, which returns to smell at the object that has caused its fright, she slowly approached the Provençal, and bending half over to obtain a nearer view of the face which he was

IN THE RUE HONORÉ-CHEVALIER

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seeking to conceal from her, in the midst of an indescribable silence, she devoted some seconds to scrutinizing it. Suddenly a terrible shriek escaped from her breast, she ran to seek shelter in Corentin's arms, and clung to him in a mad embrace.

"Save me! save me!" she cried; "it is he! the villain! the wretch! He did everything—"

And, with her extended forefinger, she seemed to nail to his place the cringing object of her loathing.

After this explosion she stammered a few disconnected words, then her eyes closed; Corentin felt the muscles relax, by which a moment before he had been held as in a vice, and he received in his arms the unconscious Lydie before it had even occurred to La Peyrade, utterly overwhelmed as he was, to assist him to support her and place her upon a couch.

"Don't stay here, monsieur," said Corentin; "go into my study; I will join you there very soon."

True to his word, Corentin was with La Peyrade a few moments after, the sick girl being left in the care of Kate and Bruneau, and Perrache despatched in hot haste for Doctor Bianchon.

"You can see for yourself, monsieur," he said solemnly, "whether, in persisting with a sort of passion in bringing about this marriage, I have forwarded God's designs."

"Monsieur," said La Peyrade humbly, "I have to confess to you—"

"It's useless," Corentin broke in; "there's nothing you can tell me, but I have much to say to you. Old Peyrade, your uncle, in the hope of securing a

dowry for his daughter, whom he worshiped, had undertaken—a thing that you will never do if you follow my advice—the handling of a risky private case. In the course of his investigations in that case he fell in with Vautrin, whom you mentioned to me yesterday, and whom the police had not then absorbed as they did later. Your uncle, clever as he was, wasn't strong enough to tilt against that fellow, who had the additional advantage that he was utterly unscrupulous in the means he employed; murder, poison, rape, it was all one to him. (See *Splendors and Miseries of Courtesans*.) To neutralize your uncle's action, Lydie was, not kidnapped, but lured away from his house, and taken to a house that was apparently all straight, where she remained sequestered for ten days, but without any special uneasiness as to her captivity and her father's absence: they had succeeded in persuading her that it was all done by his orders; and so, monsieur, as you remember, she sang in that house!"

"Oh!" exclaimed La Peyrade, covering his face with his hands.

"Being held to ransom," continued Corentin, "if her father failed to do within the ten days what he was given to understand he must do, the unfortunate girl was reserved for a horrible fate. A narcotic, a man to play the part the executioner was forced to play with the daughter of Sejanus—"

"Monsieur, monsieur, for God's sake!" cried La Peyrade.

"You know I told you yesterday," said Corentin, "that perhaps you had on your conscience something worse than the Thuillier house; but you were so young at that time! Utterly inexperienced as you were, you brought with you from your province the brutality, the frenzy of the southern blood which overflows on the least provocation;—and, besides, your relationship to the victim had been discovered, and for the artists in crime who were scheming the ruin of another Clarissa Harlowe, the refined cruelty of bringing you into the plot had something so alluring that a shrewder and more experienced roué than yourself would have failed to avoid the effects of the manœuvring of which you were the object. Happily, Providence has ordained that in this extraordinary history there is no wrong that cannot be set right; the same poison, according to the manner of its use, may cause death or bring back health."

"But, monsieur," said La Peyrade, "shall I not be an object of horror to *her,* and will it be possible for me to make this reparation of which you speak?"

"The doctor, monsieur," said Kate, opening the door.

"How is Mademoiselle Lydie?" inquired La Peyrade eagerly.

"Very quiet," was Kate's reply; "and just now, when I carried her her bundle of rags to induce her to go to bed, for she had refused to do it, saying that she wasn't sick—she said to me as if she was surprised: 'What do you want me to do with that, my poor Kate? if you want me to play dolls, do

give me one that's made up a little better than that.'"

"You see," said Corentin, pressing La Peyrade's hand, "you're the lance of Achilles."

And he went out with Kate to receive Bianchon.

Théodose, left to himself, had been for some time engrossed in such reflections as may be imagined, when the study door opened, and Bruneau, the valet de chambre, ushered in Cérizet.

"Aha!" cried the copyist as his eye fell upon La Peyrade, "I knew that you'd end by coming to see Du Portail—Well, how does the marriage come on?"

"Why, I ought rather to ask you about yours," replied the Provençal.

"Well, well! have they told you about that? Faith, yes, my dear boy. A fellow must go into port at last after sailing so long on a stormy sea.—You know whom I'm going to marry?"

"Yes, a young actress, Mademoiselle Olympe Cardinal, a protégé of the Minard family, who contribute thirty thousand francs toward her establishment."

"Which," continued Cérizet, "added to thirty thousand Du Portail has promised me if your marriage comes off, and to the other twenty thousand I made out of your marriage that won't come off, make a snug little capital of eighty-five thousand francs; with that, you know, and a pretty wife, a man must be abandoned by Heaven if he can't get hold of a good thing or two. But I have one to

discuss with you first of all. Du Portail, who's too busy to see me, has sent me here to agree with you on some way of putting a spoke in Thuillier's election. Have you any ideas on the subject?"

"No, and I confess that, in the state of mind in which the conversation I have just had with Monsieur du Portail has left me, I don't feel greatly inclined to exert my imagination."

"This is the way the thing stands," Cérizet resumed. "The government has on hand another candidate, who hasn't yet been brought forward because there's been some difficulty about the ministerial bargain with him. Meanwhile, Thuillier's candidacy has made progress; Minard, whom they'd relied on to make a diversion, has hung back in his corner like an ass, and the seizure of your pamphlet gave your stupid protégé a considerable odor of popularity. In short, the minister's afraid he'll pull it off, and nothing would be more disagreeable to them than his election. Pompous idiots like Thuillier are horribly embarrassing in opposition; they're like jugs without handles, you never know where to take hold of 'em."

"Monsieur Cérizet," said La Peyrade, beginning to assume a patronizing tone, and being desirous, moreover, to ascertain just how far his companion was admitted to Corentin's confidence, "you seem to be well posted as to the private intentions of the government: can it be that you have found the way to a certain money box on Rue de Grenelle?"

"No. All that I tell you," replied Cérizet,—"for it seems that we are not upon as intimate terms as formerly,—I know from Du Portail."

"Ah!" said La Peyrade, lowering his voice, "what is Du Portail any way? you have had business with him for some time, and a man of your calibre must have seen through this great personage, who, between ourselves, seems to me to have a good deal of mystery about him."

"My friend," Cérizet replied, "Du Portail's a good deal of a man. He's an old fox who acts to me as if he'd been employed in the Public Lands department, where he probably held some manager's berth in the departments suppressed at the fall of the Empire, such as the department of La Dyle or La Doire or Sambre-et-Meuse, or Les Deux-Nèthes."

"Yes—" said La Peyrade.

"There he seems to have feathered his nest," continued Cérizet, "and—a very ingenious idea this,—having a natural daughter, he arranged a little philanthropical stepping-stone for himself, by passing her off as the daughter of one of his friends named Peyrade, whom he had taken into his house. Now, to confirm the probability of this story, your name of La Peyrade suggested to him the idea of having you marry her, because she must marry someone, you see."

"Very good! but how do you explain his intimate relations with the government and his interest in the elections?"

"It's the most natural thing in the world," Cérizet replied. "Du Portail's a man who loves money, and loves to have a hand in everything; he has done some service as an amateur for Rastignac, the great campaign manager, who's a compatriot of his, I think; Rastignac, in exchange, gives him points with which he gambles on the Bourse."

"Did he confide all this to you?" queried La Peyrade.

"What do you take me for?" retorted Cérizet; "with the good old man, from whom, you see, I have already extracted a promise of thirty thousand francs, I play the blockhead and flatten myself out, but I have pumped Bruneau, his old footman. You can safely go into the family, my dear fellow, for Du Portail is tremendously rich and he'll get you appointed sub-prefect; and from that to the prefecture, with the fortune you'll have, is only a step, as you can see."

"I thank you for this information," said La Peyrade; "at least I shall know which foot to dance on; but how did you find it out yourself?"

"Oh! it's a long story; through my intervention he recovered possession of a lot of diamonds that had been stolen from him."

At that moment Corentin appeared.

"Everything is going on as well as possible," he said to La Peyrade. "Her reason seems to be in a fair way to return. Bianchon, from whom I thought it my duty to keep nothing back, wishes to have a talk with you.—So, dear Monsieur Cérizet, we'll

postpone till this evening, if you please, our little discussion of the Thuillier affair."

"Well, here he is at last!" said Cérizet, slapping La Peyrade on the shoulder.

"Yes," said Corentin, "and you know what I promised you—you can count on it."

Cérizet took his leave in high glee.

*

On the day following that on which this conference took place between Corentin, La Peyrade and Cérizet, their object being to place Thuillier's candidacy in a state of siege, that gentleman was talking over with his sister the letter in which Théodose had renounced his claim to Céleste's hand, and he seemed especially preoccupied by the postscript conveying the hint that the Provençal might not retain his post as editor-in-chief of the *Écho de la Bièvre*. At this juncture Henri, his servant, came to ask if he would receive Monsieur Cérizet.

Thuillier's first impulse was to show his unexpected visitor the door. He soon thought better of it, however, reflecting that, in the embarrassing position in which he felt that La Peyrade was likely to leave him at any moment, Cérizet might be an invaluable resource. Consequently he gave orders that he should be admitted.

His greeting was very cold, nevertheless, and in a certain sense expectant. Cérizet was quite unembarrassed and had the air of a man who had calculated the consequences of his act.

"Well, my dear sir," he said to Thuillier, "are you beginning to find out a little something about friend La Peyrade?"

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the old *beau*.

"Why, it seems to me," replied Cérizet, "that the man who, after doing so much scheming to marry your goddaughter, suddenly breaks off the match, just as he'll break one of these days the lion-like contract he made you sign, making him editor-in-chief, can hardly expect to be the object of such blind confidence on your part as in the past."

"So you have some information," said Thuillier hastily, "as to La Peyrade's intention of leaving the paper?"

"No," said the poor man's banker; "being on such terms as I am with him you can understand that I haven't seen him, much less been honored with his confidence. But, to draw my inferences, I start with the man's well-known character, and you can look upon it as certain that, when the day comes that he finds it to his advantage to leave you, he'll drop you then, just as one casts off an old coat; I have been through it and I speak from experience."

"So you've had some rows with him before this newspaper business, have you?" asked Thuillier.

"*Parbleu!*" replied Cérizet; "I was the man who struck the scent in the matter of the real estate he got you to buy. He was to introduce me to you, and to fix it so that I could have a lease of the whole property; but that beastly overbidding business came up, and he took advantage of it to throw me over, and keep all the profits of the scheme for himself."

"The profits!" said Thuillier; "I don't see that

his profits have amounted to very much, and, except the marriage that he himself declines now to—"

"What!" the usurer interrupted; "remember the ten thousand francs he got out of you on the pretence of procuring the Cross you're still waiting for; and the twenty-five thousand due Madame Lambert, which you became surety for, and which you can pay right up like a good boy."

"What's that you say!" cried Brigitte, leaping from her chair, "twenty-five thousand francs you're surety for?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," replied Cérizet; "there was a mystery back of that sum, which that woman loaned him about as much as I did, and if I didn't put my hand on the real explanation, there was certainly something very dirty at the bottom of it. But La Peyrade has had a way of washing himself clean in your good brother's eyes and then forcing himself upon him as a much abused and necessary—"

"But how do you know that I became surety for La Peyrade," interposed Thuillier, "if you haven't seen him since?"

"I know it from the woman herself, monsieur, who tells everybody that, now she's sure of being paid."

"Well," said Brigitte to her brother, "you do get into pretty messes!"

"Mademoiselle," continued Cérizet, "I wanted to stir up Monsieur Thuillier a little, but, in reality, I don't think you'll lose anything. Although I haven't any definite information about La Peyrade's

projected marriage, it's hard to believe that the family will want to leave him with those two shameful debts around his neck, and, if need be, I'll take a hand in it."

"Monsieur," said Thuillier, "while thanking you for your officious intervention permit me to say that it surprises me a little, for I could hardly hope for it after the way we parted."

"Nonsense!" said Cérizet, "for God's sake, do you suppose I bear you malice for it? I pitied you, that was all: I saw that you were under the spell, and I said to myself that I must leave you to be experimented on by La Peyrade, but I knew that the day would soon dawn when justice would be done me. With that gentleman one never has to wait long for some vile performance or other."

"I beg your pardon," said Thuillier, "but I don't call it a vile performance to break off the marriage we'd had in view; the thing was done by common agreement, in a certain sense."

"And what about the embarrassing position he proposes to leave you in by suddenly giving up his position as editor-in-chief," retorted Cérizet, "and the debt he's left hanging over you—do you look upon that as a courteous piece of business too?"

"Monsieur Cérizet," said Thuillier, still maintaining an attitude of reserve, "as I once said to La Peyrade, no man is indispensable, and if the editorship of my newspaper should happen to be vacated, I am sure that I should find plenty of people eager to offer me their services."

"Do you mean that for me?" asked Cérizet; "you're a long way off if you do, for if you should do me the honor to desire my assistance, it would be impossible for me to gratify you. I became disgusted with newspapers long ago; I allowed myself to be inveigled by La Peyrade, I don't know how, into making one more campaign with you, but this last experience turned out so badly that I promised myself I'd never be caught at it again: it was something quite different from the newspaper business that I came to talk to you about."

"Ah!" said Thuillier.

"Yes," Cérizet replied; "as I recalled the business-like way in which you carried through the affair of this house, in which I now have the honor to be received by you, I thought that I could do no better than come to you about an affair of the same description which I have in hand at this moment. But I won't do as La Peyrade did. I won't tell you that I want to marry your goddaughter, and that I do what I do through friendship and devotion to you. In the first place, there's a chance for a bargain that I want to make something out of; in the second place, I'm inclined to think that mademoiselle finds the management of this property rather a heavy burden, for I noticed just now that all your shops are still to let. Very well, if she cared to reconsider the suggestion of letting me in as principal tenant, which La Peyrade nipped in the bud, why that might be taken into account in dividing up the profits. That's the object of my visit, monsieur,

and you see that the newspaper question isn't at all concerned in it."

"But first of all we must know what this bargain is," said Brigitte.

"It's precisely the opposite of the one you went into with La Peyrade," rejoined Cérizet. "You got this house for nothing, but you were kept on tenter-hooks by an overbid. Well, this that I've come about to-day is a farm in Beauce, which has just been sold for a song, and, for a mere trifle above the price, you can secure it at a fabulous bargain."

Thereupon Cérizet explained all the mechanism, details which the reader will forgive our not entering upon, as, in all probability, he would take less interest therein than Brigitte did. The explanation was very clear, very precise; it took a sharp hold on the old maid's imagination; and Thuillier himself, despite his instinctive distrust, was forced to admit that the proposed purchase had the appearance at least of a very profitable speculation.

"But we must see the place," said Brigitte.

It will be remembered that in the matter of the house near the Madeleine she refused to say the first word to La Peyrade until she had made a descent upon the property.

"Nothing can be easier," said Cérizet: "I myself want to know what it's like, in case we shouldn't go into the thing together; it was my purpose to take a little excursion down that way about this time; so if you choose I'll come to your door after a while with a post-chaise; we shall be there

early to-morrow morning, take a look around and have our lunch, and we can be back here in time for dinner to-morrow night."

"But the post is terrible swell," said Brigitte; "seems to me the diligence—"

"If we go by the diligence," Cérizet replied, "no one knows when we'll get there; any way you don't need to worry about the expense; I should take the trip alone, if not with you, so I offer you two places in my carriage. If we strike a bargain, why when we come to settle our accounts, we'll count it in the expenses."

With misers, small gains are often a decisive consideration in important affairs; and after a little *pro forma* resistance Brigitte ended by subscribing to the proposed arrangement. The same day the three partners started for Chartres. Cérizet had advised Thuillier to say nothing to La Peyrade about the trip, for fear that it might occur to the Provençal to take advantage of his short absence to deal him some cowardly blow.

The next evening at five o'clock the trio had returned, and the brother and sister, who had not felt at liberty to exchange their impressions in Cérizet's presence, agreed in the opinion that it would be an excellent purchase. They had found land of the first quality, farmbuildings in perfect condition, livestock and farming implements of very good appearance; and to become the proprietor of an estate in the country was, in Brigitte's eyes, to be stamped with the Hall-mark of opulence.

"Minard," said she, "has only his house in the city and his securities; we shall own a country estate, lands and houses; no one is rich without that."

Thuillier was not so entirely under the spell of this dream, which was not likely to be realized for some time to come, as to lose sight of his campaign and his newspaper. His first thought was to ask for the number that appeared that morning.

"It hasn't arrived," replied the servant.

"How well the delivery is looked after!" said Thuillier angrily, "not even the proprietor is supplied!"

And, although the dinner-hour was near at hand, and after the journey he had taken he was more inclined to get into his bath than to drive to Rue d'Enfer, Thuillier took a cab and betook himself to the office of the *Écho*.

There, renewed disappointment; the paper *was made*, all the employés had gone home, as well as La Peyrade; and Coffinet, who, being absent from his post as messenger, should at least have been at his post as concierge, *was out on business* said his wife, and had taken with him the key of the closet where the files of the paper were kept. So the unlucky proprietor was unable to procure a copy of the number he had come so far to seek.

It would be impossible to describe Thuillier's indignation, as he stalked back and forth in the editorial sanctum, talking aloud to himself, as people do in moments of intense excitement.

"I'll turn them all out of doors," he cried.

We feel compelled to soften the emphasis of his furious exclamation.

As he uttered this anathema, some one who had witnessed it, knocked at the door of the room.

"Come in!" cried Thuillier, in a tone in which his impatience and wrath were abundantly in evidence.

Thereupon Minard appeared and threw himself into his arms.

"My dear, my generous friend!" exclaimed the mayor of the eleventh, following up his embrace with a cordial grasp of the hand.

"What now! what's the matter?" demanded Thuillier, utterly unable to comprehend the warmth of these demonstrations.

"Ah! my dear fellow," continued Minard, "it's an admirable proceeding on your part; no one could be more chivalrous, more unselfish! it has had a tremendous effect all through the arrondissement."

"Once more, what is it?" cried Thuillier, impatiently.

"The article, the whole thing," continued Minard, "is so noble, so high-minded!"

"What article? what whole thing?" demanded the proprietor of the *Écho*, altogether out of patience.

"The article in this morning's paper," Minard replied.

"The article in this morning's paper?"

"Come, come! did you write it while you were asleep, or do you perform heroic deeds without knowing it, as Monsieur Jourdain wrote prose?"

"I have written no article," cried Thuillier,

"I've been away from Paris since yesterday and I don't even know what there was in the paper this morning; there isn't so much as an office-boy here to give me a copy."

"I have it here," said Minard, taking from his pocket the long-wished-for number; "if you didn't write the editorial, at least you inspired it, and at all events it's done."

Thuillier pounced upon the sheet Minard handed him, and devoured rather than read the following article:

"'The proprietor of this regenerated journal has submitted long enough, without complaint and without rejoinder, to the cowardly insinuations with which a venal press drenches every citizen, who, standing firmly to his convictions, refuses to pass beneath the Caudine Forks of the ruling powers. For a man who has already given ample proofs of devotion and self-abnegation in performing the important functions of a member of the Parisian municipality, he has long enough allowed it to be said that he was nothing but an ambitious schemer. Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier, from the eminence of his dignity, has passed these vulgar insults by with disdain; and, encouraged by this contemptuous silence, paid scribblers have dared to write that a newspaper, an organ of settled convictions and of the most disinterested patriotism, was simply the stepping-stone of an individual, and the speculation of a would-be deputy. Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier has maintained his impassive attitude in the face of these imputations, because justice and truth are long-suffering, and because he wished to crush the reptile at a single blow. The time to put that wish in execution has arrived.'

"That devil of a La Peyrade!" said Thuillier, pausing at that sentence; "how he does hit it off!"

"Ah! it's magnificent!" cried Minard.

Thuillier read on aloud:

"'Everybody, friends and foes alike, will do Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier the justice to say that he has done nothing to promote his candidacy, which was spontaneously forced upon him.'

"That's clear," said Thuillier, interrupting himself again.

Then he continued his reading:

"'But since his sentiments have been so shamelessly misrepresented, his purposes so hatefully travestied, Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier owes it to himself, and more than all else to the great national party in which he is one of the humblest soldiers, to set an example which will confound the vile sycophants of power.'

"Really La Peyrade states my position extremely well," said Thuillier, suspending his reading once more, "and now I understand why he prevented their sending me the paper; he wanted to enjoy my surprise.—'*Which will confound the vile sycophants of power,*'" he repeated, after this reflection.

"'So far is Monsieur Thuillier from having founded a journal opposed to the present dynasty in order to bring forward and maintain his own candidacy, that at the moment when the probabilities of the approaching election seem most favorable to him and most desperate for his rivals, he declares publicly in these columns, in the most formal, most absolute and most irrevocable manner, THAT HE RENOUNCES HIS CANDIDACY—'

"What! what!" cried Thuillier, thinking that he had not read aright or had misunderstood.

"Go on!" said the mayor of the eleventh.

And as Thuillier, glaring wildly about, did not seem inclined to continue, Minard took the paper from his hands and read on in his stead:

"'Renounces his candidacy, and urges the electors to transfer to Monsieur Minard, mayor of the eleventh arrondissement, and his friend and colleague in his municipal functions, all the votes with which they seemed disposed to honor him.'"

"Why, that's abominable!" cried Thuillier, recovering the use of his tongue; "you've bought that Jesuit La Peyrade—"

"Do you mean," said Minard, aghast at Thuillier's attitude, "that the article wasn't written in concert with you?"

"The villain took advantage of my absence to slip it into the paper; now I understand why he prevented their sending me a copy."

"My dear fellow," said Minard, "what you say will seem quite incredible to the world."

"But I tell you it was downright treachery, an outrageous swindle—Renounce my candidacy! why should I renounce it, I'd like to know?"

"You understand, my dear fellow, that if there has been any abuse of confidence, I am deeply pained, but I have issued my electoral manifesto, and, now let the best man win, deuce take it!"

"Get out," said Thuillier, "it's a comedy paid for by you!"

"Monsieur Thuillier," cried Minard, in a threatening tone, "I don't advise you to repeat that, unless you have made up your mind to give me satisfaction."

Luckily for Thuillier, who had previously made his profession of faith as to civil courage, he was spared the necessity of replying by Coffinet, who threw open the door of the editor's office and announced:

"Messieurs, the electors of the twelfth arrondissement."

The arrondissement was represented by five persons. A druggist, president of the deputation, addressed Thuillier in the following words:

"We have come, monsieur, after reading an article printed this morning in the *Écho de la Bièvre*, to ask you what is the origin and the exact meaning of that article, for we cannot believe that after having solicited our suffrages, you would, on the eve of the election, through misapplied puritanism, cast confusion and discord into our ranks and probably assure the triumph of the ministerial candidate. A candidate does not belong to himself, he belongs to the electors who have promised to honor him with their votes. However," continued the orator with a glance at Minard, "*the presence in this place* of the candidate you take the trouble to recommend to us indicates that there's some connivance between you and him, and I don't need to ask who's being hoodwinked here."

"But, messieurs," said Thuillier, "I don't abandon

my candidacy. That article was written and printed without my knowledge. To-morrow you will see a contradiction in the same paper, and at the same time you will learn that the infamous scoundrel who has betrayed my confidence has ceased to belong to the editorial staff."

"Then you are still the candidate of the opposition," said the orator, "notwithstanding your contrary declaration?"

"Yes, messieurs, to the death, and I beg you to use all your influence in the quarter to neutralize the effect of this snare as industriously as possible, until I can put forth officially a most explicit disavowal."

"Good! good!" said the electors.

"And as for the presence of Monsieur Minard, my rival, *in this place*, I did not invite it, and when you came in I was engaged in a very sharp controversy with him."

"Good! good!" said the electors again.

Thereupon, having cordially pressed the druggist's hand, Thuillier escorted the deputation to the outer door of the establishment.

"My dear Minard," he said, when he returned to the editorial rooms, "I withdraw the expression that offended you, but you can see now that my indignation was all in good faith."

Again Coffinet opened the door and announced:

"Messieurs, the electors of the eleventh arrondissement."

This arrondissement was represented by seven

persons. A hosier, president of the deputation, addressed to Thuillier the following little speech:

"Monsieur, it was with sincere admiration that we learned this morning, through your journal, of your praiseworthy civic action, by which we are, one and all, deeply touched. By thus withdrawing you show a rare degree of disinterestedness, and the esteem of your fellow-citizens—"

"Pardon me," Thuillier interposed, "I cannot let you proceed; the article upon which you are pleased to congratulate me was inserted by mistake."

"What!" said the hosier, "you don't withdraw? and do you imagine that, beside the candidacy of Monsieur Minard, whose presence *in this place* seems to me under the circumstances decidedly peculiar, your persistence has any chance of success?"

"Monsieur," said Thuillier, "be good enough to request the electors to wait until to-morrow's number appears; in that I will furnish a full and categorical explanation. To-day's article is the result of a misunderstanding."

"So much the worse for you, monsieur," said the hosier, "if you miss the opportunity to place yourself, in the opinion of your fellow-citizens, beside the Washingtons and other great men of antiquity!"

"Until to-morrow, gentlemen," said Thuillier; "I am none the less touched by your action, and when you know the whole truth I trust you will not consider that I have forfeited your esteem."

"This is a queer kind of a mess any way," observed an elector in a loud voice.

"Yes," said another, "it looks a little like making fools of us!"

"Messieurs! messieurs!" said the president of the deputation soothingly, "wait till to-morrow! then we'll read the candidate's explanations."

And the deputation withdrew.

It is probable that Thuillier would not have escorted them beyond the first door in any event, but he was prevented from doing so by La Peyrade, who came in at that moment.

"I have just came from your house, my dear fellow," said the Provençal; "they told me I should find you here."

"And your purpose in coming, no doubt, is to give me some explanation of the extraordinary article you presumed to insert in my name?"

"Precisely," said La Peyrade. "The man whom you know, and whose powerful influence you have already felt, confided to me yesterday, in your interest, the government's intentions, and I was fully convinced that your defeat was inevitable. I determined therefore to arrange for your withdrawal in a dignified and honorable way."

"Very good, monsieur," said Thuillier, "but you are aware that from this moment you are not connected with the editorial department of this paper?"

"I came to tell you that myself."

"And to settle our little account no doubt."

"Gentlemen," said Minard, "I see that you are discussing private business, so I'll make my bow."

"Here are ten thousand francs," said La Peyrade,

as soon as Minard had gone, "which I beg you to hand to Mademoiselle Brigitte; also the bond you gave as surety for me for the twenty-five thousand francs due to Madame Lambert, for which I hold her receipt."

"Very well, monsieur,—" said Thuillier.

La Peyrade bowed and took his leave.

"Serpent!" exclaimed Thuillier looking after him.

"Cérizet hit it about right," said La Peyrade; "a pompous idiot!"

The blow aimed at Thuillier's candidacy was a mortal one, but Minard did not profit by it. While they were disputing for the suffrages of the electors, a man from the Tuileries, one of the king's aides-de-camp, arrived on the ground with his hands filled with appointments to tobacco agencies and other slight electoral bribes and, like the third thief, stole in between the two candidates who were busily devouring each other.

It goes without saying that Brigitte did not get her farm in Beauce: that was a mirage by whose aid Thuillier was lured away from Paris so that La Peyrade could deal his blow. This little stratagem was a service rendered to the government, and at the same time a means of revenge for all the humiliation the Provençal had undergone.

Thuillier had some suspicion of Cérizet's complicity, but he knew a way to justify himself, and by negotiating the sale of the *Écho de la Bièvre*, which had become a nightmare to its unfortunate proprietor, he washed himself whiter than snow.

The paltry organ of the opposition was purchased under Corentin's auspices and transformed into a *canard*, sold on Sundays in the wine-shops after having been prepared in the *dens* of the police.

About a month after the scene in which La Peyrade had become convinced that by an error of his past he had irrevocably pledged his future, being now married to his victim, who had lucid intervals of considerable duration, but was not likely to recover her reason fully until the time when she should be in the condition previously indicated by the doctors, Corentin's destined successor was sitting with him one morning in his study.

Having a part assigned to him in the great master's work, he was serving under him his apprenticeship to the difficult and delicate functions to which henceforth his life was to be devoted. But Corentin did not consider that his pupil took hold of the work with all the enthusiasm and goodwill he would have liked to see. He saw clearly that there was a feeling of moral degeneration in the Provençal's conscience; time would eventually do away with that feeling, but the callus was not yet formed.

After breaking the seals of a large number of envelopes covering reports from his agents, Corentin ran his eye rapidly over the papers, which are much more seldom of any practical utility than one might suppose; then he tossed them disdainfully into a basket, whence they would be taken out in a mass to be burned. But the great detective seemed to pay unusual attention to one of these reports, and

while he was running it over a smile played about his lips from time to time.

"Here," he said to La Peyrade when he had finished, passing him the manuscript, "here's something that will interest you, and you can see if, even in our profession, which seems so solemn to you, we don't sometimes pick up a little comedy along our road. Read it aloud, it will cheer us up. —It is well that you should know," he added, before La Peyrade began to read, "that the report is from one Henri, for whom Madame Komorn got a place at Thuillier's."

"So servants provided by yourself are one of the means you use?" said La Peyrade.

"Sometimes," Corentin replied: "to find out everything we must resort to every available means; but innumerable falsehoods are told on that subject. It isn't true that the police have reduced the thing to a system, and that, at certain times, by means of a general enlistment of footmen and chamber-maids, they have spread a vast network about the private lives of families. There's no absolute rule that we follow; we govern our action according to the time and the circumstances. I needed an ear in the Thuillier household, and some source of influence there, so I let La Godollo loose upon them; she, in her turn, installed one of our men there to back her up,—an intelligent fellow as you will see; but, under other circumstances, I would order the arrest of a servant who came and offered to sell me his master's secrets, and I would see to it that the party interested

was notified to be a little distrustful of the discretion of those about him."

"Monsieur le Directeur de la Police Secrète,"—so wrote Henri to Corentin,—"I did not remain with the little baron; he is a man entirely engrossed by his pleasures, and I could never have learned anything with him, worthy of being reported to you. I have found another place, where I have already been a witness to several things which, because of their connection with the mission entrusted to me by Madame la Comtesse de Godollo, seem likely to interest you; I hasten therefore, to bring them to your notice. The house where I am *employed* is that of an old scientist, one Monsieur Picot, who occupies a first floor on Place de la Madeleine, the same house and the same suite once occupied by my former masters, the Thuilliers.

"What!" cried La Peyrade, breaking off his reading, "Père Picot, that bankrupt old madman, living in those magnificent apartments?"

"Come, come!" said Corentin, "life is full of stranger things than that; that will be made clear to you below; our correspondent—it's a fault they all have, drowning themselves in details—puts too many dots over his i's."

"The Thuilliers," Henri continued, "left this apartment some time ago to return to their Latin quarter. Mademoiselle Brigitte never enjoyed herself much in *our* latitude; her absolute lack of education

made her uncomfortable there. Just because I speak correctly, she used to call me the orator, and could never endure Monsieur Pascal, her concierge, *seeing that* being a beadle of the parish of the Madeleine, he has rather a formal manner; and even the dealers at the great market behind the church, where she naturally bought her provisions, she found some reason to find fault with, complaining that they were conceited because they're not foul-mouthed as they are at the Halle, and because they laughed in her face when she haggled about prices. She has let the whole property to one Monsieur Cérizet,—a hideous-looking man whose nose is all eaten away, —for an annual rent of fifty-five thousand francs. This tenant seems to know what he's about; he has just married an actress at one of the small theatres and intended to occupy the first floor, where he was even talking of setting up, with his household gods, the offices of a *Minor Children's Endowment Assurance Company,* when Monsieur Picot, arriving from England with his wife, a very rich Englishwoman, saw the apartment, and offered a good price for it, and Monsieur Cérizet decided to let him have it; it was then that, through the good offices of Monsieur Pascal, the concierge, with whom I was on the best of terms, I procured a situation with this Monsieur Picot.

"Monsieur Picot married to a very rich English woman," said La Peyrade, interrupting himself again, "it's past my comprehension."

"Read on," said Corentin, "I tell you you'll understand later."

"My new master's fortune," the report continued, "is a long story, and I mention it to Monsieur le Directeur because another person, *in whose* marriage Madame de Godollo interested herself, is closely connected with it. This other person is one Félix Phellion, discoverer of a star, who, in despair at being unable to marry the young lady they wanted to give Sieur de la Peyrade, whom Madame de Godollo bamboozled so prettily—

"The villain!" exclaimed the Provençal parenthetically, "how he speaks of me! he doesn't know yet whom he has to deal with—"

Corentin laughed heartily, then requested his pupil to continue.

"Who, in despair at being unable to marry the young lady, etc., had gone to England, where he proposed to start on a journey round the world, which is a typical lover's scheme. Hearing of his departure, Monsieur Picot, his former professor, who takes a deep interest in him, immediately started after him to argue him out of his whim, and it wasn't a difficult thing to do. The English are naturally very jealous on the subject of discoveries, and when they found Monsieur Phellion preparing to set sail in the track of their scientific men, they asked him if he had an order from the Admiralty; as he couldn't furnish one, they laughed in his face

and went away refusing to hear a word, because they were afraid he knew more than they.

"Your Monsieur Henri isn't very careful of the *entente cordiale,*" said La Peyrade, with a laugh.

"No," Corentin replied; "you'll be surprised to notice this general and continual tendency to disparagement in all our agents' reports. But what would you expect? you can't get angels to follow the trade of spies."

"Left upon the strand," La Peyrade continued, "Telemachus and his Mentor—

"You see that our men are well-lettered," observed Corentin.

"Telemachus and his Mentor were preparing to return to France, when Monsieur Picot received such a letter as only English women can write. The writer said that she had read his *Theory of Perpetual Motion;* that she had heard of his recent magnificent discovery of a star; that she looked upon him as at least Newton's equal in genius, and that if the writer's hand, added to a dowry of eighty thousand pounds sterling or two million francs, had any attraction for him, it was at his disposal. Monsieur Picot seemed to appreciate the offer, and he kept the appointment made by the Englishwoman, who turned out to be at least forty years old with a red nose and huge teeth, and spectacles. The good man's first thought was to marry her to his pupil,

but realizing that that would be impossible, before accepting her on his own account, he called her attention to the fact that he was an old man, three-quarters blind, that he hadn't discovered any star, and that he hadn't a sou in the world. The Englishwoman replied that Milton wasn't young either and was stone-blind; that Monsieur Picot seemed to have nothing but a cataract; that she knew all about it, for she was a surgeon's daughter, and that she would have it operated on; that she didn't really care whether he had discovered a star; that he was the creator of the *Theory of Perpetual Motion*, who had been the only figure in her dreams for ten years, and to whom she renewed the offer of her hand with her eighty thousand pounds sterling or two millions. Monsieur Picot replied that if his sight was restored and she would consent to live in Paris, because he loathed England, he would allow himself to be married. The operation was performed and was successful, and at the end of three weeks the newly married pair arrived in the capital. I have all these details from Madame's maid with whom I am on most excellent terms."

"You see, the coxcomb!" laughed Corentin.

"But what I still have to tell Monsieur le Directeur are facts of which I can speak as an eye-witness, and which I am consequently prepared to make oath to.—As soon as Monsieur and Madame Picot were installed in their new quarters, which are

furnished most sumptuously and comfortably, my master handed me a large number of invitations to dinner, for the Thuillier family, the Colleville family, the Minard family, Monsieur l'Abbé Gondrin, vicar of La Madeleine; in short for almost all those who were guests at a dinner party a month ago at the Thuilliers', where he made a scene and behaved in a most extraordinary way. Everybody who received one of these invitations was so surprised to learn that old man Picot had married a rich wife and was living in Thuillier's old apartments, that most of them came to Monsieur Pascal, the concierge, to see if they weren't the victims of some trick. Having ascertained that the invitations were *sincere and genuine*, the whole party was on hand promptly; but Monsieur Picot wasn't there. They were received by Madame Picot, who, as she speaks very little French, simply said to everybody: 'My husband is coming directly,' and could make no further conversation, so that the guests were very much constrained and ill at ease. At last Monsieur Picot appeared; they were stupefied at first to see, instead of a slovenly old blind man, a handsome, youthful old buck, well set up and genteel, like Monsieur Ferville at the Gymnase, and who said to them in an offhand way:

"'I ask your pardon, ladies, for not being here when you arrived, but I was at the Academy of Sciences awaiting the result of the ballot for Monsieur Félix Phellion, whom you know, and who has been elected unanimously, all but three votes.'"

"This news seemed to produce a sensation among the guests. Monsieur Picot continued:

"'I have also, ladies, to offer you my apologies for my somewhat unconventional conduct a few weeks ago on this same spot where we are assembled to-day. My excuses were my infirmity, the annoyance of legal proceedings and an old servant who stole from me and tormented me in a thousand ways, and of whom I am lucky enough to be rid at last. To-day you see me rejuvenated, rich by the generosity of the excellent lady who has given me her hand, and I should be in the happiest mood to receive you as you should be received, were it not that the thought of my young friend, whose eminence is finally established by the Academy's action, casts a veil of melancholy over my mind. All of us here,' continued Monsieur Picot, raising his voice, 'are guilty toward him; I, of ungratitude when he attributed to me the glory of his discovery and the reward of his immortal labors, and because later, by enticing me to England, he was the source of the happiness which has come to me in my old age; that young lady whom I see over yonder with tears in her eyes, of having foolishly accused him of atheism; that other stern-faced young lady, of having given a harsh response to a noble proposition on the part of his old father, for whose white hairs she should have had more respect; Monsieur Thuillier, of having sacrificed him to his ambition; Monsieur Colleville, of having neglected his duty as a father, which required him to desire the worthiest

and most honorable of husbands for his daughter; Monsieur Minard, of having jealously maligned him, because he desired to put his own son in his place. There are but two people here, Madame Thuillier and Monsieur l'Abbé Gondrin, who have done him full justice! And so, I put it to the man of God, whether there is not sometimes reason to doubt the Divine Justice, when this noble-hearted youth, the victim of us all, is, at this moment, abandoned to the floods and tempests, and when he proposes to lay aside all thought of return for three long years?'

"'Providence is exceeding great, monsieur!' Abbé Gondrin replied; 'God will protect Monsieur Félix Phellion amid the perils that encompass him, and I have firm faith to believe that he will be restored to his friends in three years.'

"'But won't it be too late, three years hence?' rejoined Monsieur Picot. 'Will Mademoiselle Colleville have waited for him?'

"'Yes, I swear it!' cried the girl, carried away by an impulse she could not master.

"But the next moment, overwhelmed with shame, she sat down again and burst into tears.

"'And you, Mademoiselle Thuillier, and you, Madame Colleville,' continued Monsieur Picot, 'will you allow this child to wait for the man who is so worthy of her?'

"'Yes! yes, indeed!' came from all sides; for Monsieur Picot's voice, which is full and sonorous, and in which one could almost feel the tears, had deeply moved the whole assemblage.

"'Then it is high time,' said Monsieur Picot, 'to declare an amnesty for Providence.'

"He ran to the door to which my ear was applied, and nearly caught me in the act.

"'Announce Monsieur Félix Phellion and his family,' he said to me in a loud voice.

"As he spoke a door opened from which five or six people issued and followed Monsieur Picot into the salon.

"At sight of her *lover,* Mademoiselle Colleville swooned, but she was unconscious only a moment, and seeing Monsieur Félix at her knees, she threw herself into Madame Thuillier's arms, crying:

"'Godmother, you always told me to hope!'

"Then Mademoiselle Thuillier, who I have always thought to be a good deal of a woman despite her rigid disposition and lack of education, had a happy inspiration; as they were talking about adjourning to the dining-room, she said:

"'One moment!'

"Then she walked up to Monsieur Phellion senior.

"'Monsieur and my old friend,' said she, 'I ask the hand of Monsieur Félix Phellion for Mademoiselle Colleville, our adopted daughter!'

"'Bravo! bravo!' was heard on all sides.

"'Bless my soul!' said Monsieur Phellion with tears in his eyes, 'what have I done to deserve so much happiness?'

"'You have been an honest Christian man without knowing it,' replied Abbé Gondrin."

Here, La Peyrade threw the manuscript aside.

"Well, you don't finish," said Corentin taking up the paper. "However, there's nothing more of consequence; Monsieur Henri *confesses* that the scene moved him; he tells me that, knowing that I formerly took an interest in bringing about this marriage, he thought it his duty to inform me of the circumstances of its conclusion, and, like all extended police reports, it concludes by a hardly veiled request for a gratification.—Ah! by the way," added Corentin, "there is one detail of some importance: the Englishwoman seems to have caused Monsieur Picot to announce at dinner that she has no heirs and that after her death and her husband's her whole fortune will go to Félix, who, consequently, will be immensely rich."

La Peyrade had risen and was striding up and down the room.

"Well," said Corentin, "what's the matter?"

"Nothing," replied the Provençal.

"Yes there is," replied the official, "I fancy you're a little jealous of that young man's good fortune. My dear fellow, permit me to tell you that if such a conclusion is to your taste you ought to have done as he did: when I sent you a hundred louis so that you could pursue your legal studies, I didn't think of your succeeding me, and if you had toiled away at the oar in your galley and had had the courage to undertake obscure, laborious tasks, your day would have come. But you wanted to ravish fortune."

"Monsieur!" said La Peyrade.

"I mean, to hasten it, to cut it when it was green.—You went into journalism; from that into business; you made the acquaintance of Messieurs Dutocq and Cérizet; and, frankly, I believe you're very lucky to have cast anchor in the harbor that has received you to-day. For you aren't simple-hearted enough to believe that the delights in store for Félix Phellion would ever have had any great savor for you. These bourgeois—"

"Ah! I know the bourgeois now, and I have learned to know them at my own cost. They are very ridiculous, they have some great vices, but they have virtues, too, and many estimable qualities; they are the vital force of our corrupt society."

"Your society!" repeated Corentin with a smile; "you speak as if you were still in the ranks. You are on the outside, my dear fellow, and you must be more content with your lot; governments come and go, societies perish or decay; but we dominate them all; the police is immortal!"

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